

Sight and Sound

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new cowgirl movies
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extraordinary 'Aladdin'**
'Boiling Point': wild, sad
movies of James B Harris
**Gavin Lambert's elegy
for Tony Richardson**
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New York: African cinema
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AWARDS

Mike Leigh 'Naked'



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London International Film School, 24 Shelton Street, London WC2H 9HP
071-836 9642

Sight and Sound
(incorporating Monthly
Film Bulletin)
Volume 3 Issue 11 (NS)
21 Stephen Street
London W1P 1PL
Telephone 071 255 1444
Facsimile 071 436 2327

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US distribution
2nd class postage paid at
Rahway, NJ, and at additional
mailing offices. Postmaster:
send address corrections to
Sight and Sound, c/o Mercury
Airfreight International Ltd
Inc., 2323 Randolph Avenue,
Avenel, NJ 07001
Subscription price is \$56.00
Newsstand distribution by:
Eastern News Distributors Inc.

Annual subscription rates

UK £27.00
Europe £32.00
US airmail £32.00
Overseas surface mail £32.00
Overseas airmail £56.00
Special rates apply to BFI
members

For subscription queries
contact: Subscription
Department, Sight and Sound
Tower House, Sovereign Park
Market Harborough
Leicestershire LE16 9EF
Telephone 0858 468888
Facsimile 0858 434958
Binders available from Sight and
Sound 071 636 3289. UK £7.00,
overseas surface mail £9.00

The British Film Institute exists
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the monthly Sight and Sound
magazine



SIGHT AND SOUND MAGAZINE
Published monthly by the
British Film Institute
ISSN 0037-4806

Sight and Sound



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Cover photograph by Phil Sayer

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Cinema wars

Contributors to this issue

Mike Atkinson is a New York based freelance writer
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Andy Medhurst teaches film and television at University of Sussex and has published widely on British cinema
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B Ruby Rich is currently putting together a collection of her essays on women, film and sexuality
David Robinson has published widely on many aspects of cinema

From Coca Cola to *American Gladiators*, it is not hard to find evidence of North American cultural 'domination', if you want to look for it – and not merely in Britain but most of Europe. The battleground for such arguments has moved to Uruguay during the past month, where the apparently endless debate between Europe and the US over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) has turned its attention to the film industry. Certain European film-makers feel that audiovisual services should be excluded from the Uruguay Round and have taken advertisements in newspapers to say so; the US, inevitably, believes the contrary. (In fact, the film industry comes under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Services: GATS, not GATT.)

What the US says it is really opposed to is quotas – enshrined in a 1989 EC directive on television without frontiers – not state film subsidies. The Europeans are sceptical of this, believing that a successful attack on quotas would be the thin edge of the wedge. And even on this matter Europe does not speak with one voice, with many privately funded film-makers and television stations believing that the state has cushioned the European film and television industry from real competition for too long.

But the significance of GATS goes beyond these particular arguments, important as they are. If the spectre of continuing quotas worries the US because it believes that in the future it may be unable to sell its programmes and films to say, French television, then the block booking of cinemas by studio films, the foreign ownership of cinemas and the lack of anti-trust laws in Europe worries Europeans to as large an extent. In short, European anxieties centre on the viability of European cinema and television in a US dominated world. And there seems little doubt that if Europe's audiovisual sector does not receive exemption from the GATS talks, films such as Kieślowski's *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* will find it even more difficult in the future to find

production finance, and an audience, in Europe.

Certainly, there does seem evidence that if European work is defended and supported it can thrive. For example, quotas do seem able to widen choice for viewers in Europe, because they make available work that Europeans would not otherwise be able to see – as is evident in France where there is a protected 60 per cent of EC-produced material on the small screen. And there is just as strong evidence that subsidies enable a large number of films to be made and distributed that can go on to commercial success as well as critical acclaim (*The Crying Game* is the obvious recent example). Most recently, the commercial success of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a production with European and US money, shows there may be possibilities for fruitful co-operation between the warring parties. And there are even examples where Europeans have turned the tables on the US and invested in their films. Both *JFK* and *Under Siege* were, for example, successful films made with European money.

The reasonableness of the European position is not in doubt. But the European case is part of a larger world where Europe can seem the oppressor rather than the victim. As Manthia Diawara's piece in this issue suggests, African cinema, without a home market, has begun to make films for Europe, thus giving our continent too much power in relation to African cinema – or that is how some see it.

The truth is, the world of cinema grows increasingly complex, with a British film (*The Crying Game*) doing poorly at home and marvellous business in the US, African films being made for Europe and the likelihood, post 1997, that the Hong Kong film industry will decamp to places in North America.

As Europe defends itself, it needs to recognise not only the dizzying complexity of the world but also that its responsibilities do not stop at protecting its own hide. We are all likely to swim or sink together.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, 2 years ago this was a great script – Tom loved it but wanted changes, so it got less great. Then Dustin worked it over, made it worse & wanted 10% of the gross. Finally it collided with Bruce & disintegrated... Hell Jerry, let's go back to script 1 & do it as animation!'

The business

● Ever since RKO fell foul of the accountants of the poetically-named General Tire and Rubber company in 1953 and became the first Hollywood major to shut down, it has been fashionable to decry the corporatisation of Hollywood. "No longer do people who care about films make the decisions," goes the cry. "It's all done by the numbers men."

Leaving aside the question of whether there is much to choose between the artistic judgement of a Jack Warner, a Harry Cohn, a Louis B Mayer or a man with a calculator, the Cassandras of the cinema business should find plenty of cause for fresh wailings in the fight currently going on for control of Paramount Pictures.

On 13 September it was announced that Viacom Inc had concluded a deal to buy the studio for between \$7 and \$8 billion. This is the second highest price yet offered for a Hollywood studio (the 1989 Time-Warner merger still comes top at \$14 billion).

Paramount is the last free-standing studio in Hollywood. 20th Century-Fox belongs to Rupert Murdoch. Warner Bros merged with Time Inc in 1988; Sony bought Columbia Pictures in 1989; the Matsushita Electric Industrial Co of Japan bought Universal's parent company, MCA, in 1991; and MGM is now being operated by French bank Cr dit Lyonnais in a desperate attempt to get back some of the money it lost in the Giancarlo Parretti takeover.

The Viacom bid was almost universally welcomed both in Hollywood and on Wall Street, since the company is in essentially the same business as Paramount. Bought in 1986 by Sumner Redstone, who made his fortune with the National Amusements chain of cinemas, Viacom is a very successful TV company, with a stake in MTV and children's channel Nickelodeon, a string of TV stations across the US, and a production slate which includes such programmes as *Roseanne* and the *Perry Mason* series. In the late 80s and early 90s, Viacom also ventured into the production of medium-budget movies, of which the most successful was *Paris Trout*.

Put together with Paramount, this creates what is known, in current entertainment industry business-speak, as 'synergy' - meaning that, on the corporate balance sheet, one plus one will add up to a lot more than two.

Just a week later, however, a second bid was mounted for Paramount - this time a 'hostile' one, in the sense that (unlike Viacom's) it was not backed by the Paramount board. But it totalled at least \$1.3 billion more than Viacom had offered and it came from a company called QVC, operator of a very lucrative US teleshopping channel (which has, coincidentally,



Passport to the Oscars: does Kieślowski's *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* qualify as a 'foreign' film?

just been launched on cable and satellite in the UK).

The man behind QVC is Barry Diller, one of Hollywood's super-successful money men - he was, in fact, head of Paramount in the early 80s but left after a major and very public row with studio owner Marvin Davis - who knows a profit-and-loss report better than he does a Panavision camera. The bid - which, at 20 times Paramount's estimated 1993 cash flow, is way over the odds - has all the makings of a grudge converted into a corporate gamble. It also has bugger all synergy and appears to be about only two things (which in Diller's eyes are probably the same): money and power.

Things have not been going well for the Japanese movie business recently. First there was the Nikkatsu bankruptcy (*S&S*, September). Now the country's highest-profile and most successful producer/director has been busted for drugs.

And, while the simultaneous 'Heidiwood' scandal rocking the Sony-owned Columbia Pictures caused barely a ripple in the Japanese press, the 29 August arrest of Haruku Kadokawa for dispatching a former employee to the US to buy him some coke had repercussions on a seismic scale.

The Ministry of Education cancelled the textbook order which was the bedrock of Kadokawa's publishing empire. The Kadokawa board found a legal loophole enabling it to dismiss Haruku from control of his own company. And the police let it be known that the amount of Colombian marching powder involved was such that they suspected the producer of supplying half the Japanese film industry.

For those unfamiliar with Kadokawa's oeuvre, it extends to some 60 films and

recently encompassed a movie called *'Heaven and Earth'*, which holds the all-time record for a Japanese film at the local box office, mainly thanks to the time-honoured custom of obliging all Kadokawa Publishing employees to buy a batch of tickets.

Kadokawa also produced this summer's Japanese box-office hit, showing remarkable originality by tackling a subject few other filmmakers would have thought of, in *'Rex - The Story of a Dinosaur'*.

● Familiar with the theory of history as commodity - the phenomenon which gave us the Che Guevara T-shirt and the Terry Waite industry?

Well, those of you who believe that *Malcolm X* was a spontaneous reappraisal of American political history may be interested to know that Marvin Worth, the producer behind Spike Lee's movie, is now working on a big-budget biopic of James Dean.

Disaster was recently averted in Oslo when Swedish actress Liv Ullman stepped in to fill the director's chair vacated by compatriot Lars Molin on the country's most-hyped and longest-in-the-pipeline film of the past decade, *'Kristin Lavransdatter'*.

Based on the 1928 historical novel by Nobel Prize-winner Sigrid Undset, the film has been in pre-production for some four years, and has been through about the same number of production consortia since it was first announced to the world in a blaze of Nordic pride at Cannes in 1990.

Currently trading as a Norwegian/Swedish co-production with negotiations reportedly underway for a German partner, the film is budgeted at Nkr40 (\$5.6) million - a good five times the national average. It will be Ullman's second feature as a director after the acclaimed *'Sofie'* in 1992. Ironically, she played the part of Kristin in a stage adaptation of the novel in 1958, aged 19.

'Kristin Lavransdatter' will start filming next March, with Sven Nykvist behind the camera, and will be shot as that popular Scandinavian hybrid: a full-length (ie very long) feature film and a six-part TV series.

● In the independent film sales business, the term 'veteran' is generally applied to anybody who has survived for more than 10 years. But Chicago-born Don Getz, who died on 22 August, was a true veteran of the business.

He was also, despite valiant attempts to hide the fact behind an enormous cigar and a gravelly voice that could have done stand-up in the Catskills, one of the small minority of genuinely nice persons in that corner of the industry.

Don knew what those who, in the 70s and 80s, built a very comfortable, business-class-and-room-service lifestyle out of film sales never needed to know: that selling movies used to be a matter of quite literally hawking the product round the old 'film exchanges', not just sitting in a hotel room signing deals and sending faxes.

Over the past decade or so he handled, under his Playpoint Films banner, an impressive variety of movies, many of them from the Netherlands. Indeed, it was one of the few enjoyable ironies of an otherwise glamourless business to watch Don, who looked every inch a mogul, selling Marleen Gorris' *Question of Silence* into an alternative distribution network that identified moguls with manipulation.

They couldn't have been more wrong. Unless by 'manipulation' you mean working the floor to get the necessary result - in this case, feeding

films like *Gorris* into a cinema system that, without people like Don, would never have bothered to show them.

The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences is reported to be re-thinking the whole mess surrounding its Best Foreign Film Oscar rules (*S&S*, October) yet again.

If it doesn't, the two European films which won the top prizes at this autumn's festivals will not be eligible for nomination next February. Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Trois Couleurs: Bleu*, which shared the Golden Lion at Venice, is a French/Polish/Swiss co-production with a French producer, a Polish director, Polish writers and French stars.

And Radu Mihaileanu's *Trahir* ('Betrayal'), which won the Grand Prix des Amériques in Montreal, is a French/Romanian/Swiss/Spanish co-production with French producers, a Romanian director, and a Dutch, French and Romanian cast. Both are entirely French-speaking and both will surely count among the best European films of 1993.

Appealing to the Academy doesn't seem to have helped. Maybe pissing them off will. And, since few things piss off organisations more than an avalanche of protesting letters, readers may like to know that the Academy's address is 8949 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.

● Given the rather snotty tone with which this column has treated the question of actors becoming directors, it is a pleasure to eat humble pie and report that two debut features by actors have been ecstatically received on their US release: Morgan Freeman's drama, *Bopha!*, set in South Africa; and Forest Whitaker's *Strapped*, about New York street kids, which screened on HBO in the US but is due for theatrical release elsewhere in the world.

The comeback of the movie moppet – that is, a movie brat who actually fits the usual meaning of the word by being a mere (if hideously overpaid) child – suffered something of a setback this summer with the worldwide flop of John Hughes' *Dennis*. But the real brat business is done behind closed doors.

Macaulay Culkin, the most famous of the present crop, is currently making his first excursion into the uncute in *The Good Son*, in which he plays a psychotic mini-murderer. The result has been indifferent reviews but bonzer box office. But his dad, Kit, who manages the lad's career, played so cute himself during negotiations for Mac to star in Warner Bros' *Richie Rich* that the studio finally sent the two of them home alone without a contract.

The problem reportedly didn't lie with the

\$8 million fee: it lay with Culkin senior's 'director approval' clause – which, in this case, apparently meant exactly the opposite. How about John G. Avildsen, who won an Oscar for *'Rocky'* in 1976 and showed himself a dab hand with brats in *'The Karate Kid'*, asked Warner Bros? Not good enough for my boy, said Kit. What about Joe Johnston (*'Honey, I Shrank the Kids'*)? No, no, no, said Mr C. Bye, bye, bye, said Warner Bros.

That little episode made it into quite a few of the non-trade papers. Not so the equally poisonous – and equally unsuccessful – attempt by Dianne Ponce, mother and manager of Michael Oliver, who played the obnoxious hero of *'Problem Child I'* and *'II'*, to take on Universal Pictures.

Considering herself more street-smart than Kit, Momma Ponce waited until the day before filming was due to start on *'PCII'* before telling Universal she and the kid would be leaving if they didn't get \$500,000 instead of the originally agreed \$80,000. Since cancelling the movie at that stage would have cost them \$4 million, Universal paid up.

Or rather, they paid up half but, once the movie was finished, declined to pay the rest. The moppet's mum took them to court – and lost. It has to be said that Universal are not the only winners. If nothing else, the ruling presumably ensures that there will never be a *'Problem Child III'*.

● 'Where Are They Now?' department, sub-section 'Michael'.

Item one: Michael Moore, who made one of the most successful documentaries of the past 10 years, *Roger and Me*, and has spent much of the time since in litigation. He is now about to make his first feature, *Canadian Bacon*. Set in the near future, it is about Canada fighting back when the US – against all historical precedent, of course – tries to plunder her natural resources.

Item two: Michael Radford who, with 1984 and *White Mischief*, briefly looked as though he was going to set British cinema alight. After that, a lengthy hiatus. A long-planned film version of Anais Nin's *Delta of Venus* disappeared, only to resurface last year as a Nic Roeg project.

Radford himself, however, is now at work in Italy on a new film, *Il postino* (*The Postman*), about a letter-deliverer (played by Massimo Troisi) who has only one client: the poet Pablo Neruda (played by Philippe Noiret).

Good to hear of at least one British director who, unable to get a film made in Britain, has chosen to try somewhere else other than Hollywood.

VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

Venice 1993, everyone agreed, was an ominous sign of the times. For the first time in the festival's 60-year history, American films dominated the event as imperiously as they already do the commercial screens of the world. *Jurassic Park*, still to be released in much of continental Europe, held hardened festivaliers as mesmerised as the 12-year-olds; and few European critics had the nerve to protest at the extent to which Spielberg short-changes his dinosaur-captivated audience with the stupid script and characters.

Even if the presence of Jennifer Lynch's *Boxing Helena* (received respectfully) and Abel Ferrara's *Snake Eyes* hardly seemed justified, there was no question of the superiority of other Hollywood films in this international arena: Woody Allen's *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, Martin Scorsese's Wharton adaptation, *The Age of Innocence*, Ivan Reitman's endearing fable *Dave*, Wolfgang Petersen's *In The Line of Fire*; and two confident debuts, Dominic Sena's *Kalifornia*, and Robert De Niro's *A Bronx Tale* – a nice guy's *GoodFellas*.

Most of these were shown *hors concours*. In competition, there was never any doubt that Robert Altman's monumental *Short Cuts* would take the Golden Lion. (In fact it shared the main prize with Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Trois Couleurs: Bleu*). Altman miraculously transforms a group of minimalist story-sketches by

Raymond Carver into a sprawling visionary comedy of fin-de-siècle human existence. The microcosmic setting is California, basking under the permanent apocalyptic threat of the coming 'quake.

The ill omens of Venice lay not in the fact of this impressive American presence, but in the sense that the rest of the world seemed simply to have succumbed in the face of the insuperable. Promises were all broken: new films by Bertrand Blier, João Botelho, Liliana Cavani, Jean-Luc Godard, Carlos Saura, Kon Ichikawa, even Ermanno Olmi and young Clara Law were most kindly passed over in silence. Out of the whole non-American part of the programme barely half a dozen stay in the mind.

Of these, *Bad Boy Bobby* is admittedly unforgettable. Technically an Italian production, filmed in Adelaide by a Dutch-born Australian, Rolf de Heer, the film displays the unique Australian excellence of discarding every conventional notion of good taste, revelling in its offensiveness. De Heer explains that the project arose out of schizophrenic ambitions to make films about childhood and about serial killers. His research taught him that "almost without exception serial killers had had some form of deprived childhood. Is this an indication that perhaps the single most important thing we can do is to love our children, without abuse? The film became,

for me, a plea for childhood." He adds, disarmingly, "high mindedness can be unforgivable if it is not also entertaining".

Bobby (played by the English-born Nick Hope) has spent his first 35 years confined in a cellar by his gross and crazy mother, who enthusiastically abuses him physically and sexually and frightens him with tales of deadly poison gas outside the door. Having discovered the lethal effectiveness of cling-wrapping pussy-cats or people, Bobby dispenses with mother and ventures outside. What follows are the impressions of contemporary life received by a creature as innocently unprepared as E.T. or Kaspar Hauser (Bobby combines something of both). Deprived of his own personality, Bobby simply takes on characteristics of the people he meets – which, in a world of appearances, is a certain way to success.

Technically the film is as eccentrically fascinating as in its theme and lack of inhibition. The sound was recorded by binaural microphones concealed about Nick Hope's head; and 31 cameramen were separately employed to reflect his ever-changing vision.

In its more formal way, Maria Luisa Bemberg's *De Eso No Se Habla* also challenges politer conventions. Set in a small Argentinian town half a century ago, this is the tragi-comedy of a mother who will not acknowledge that her daughter,

besides being charming, intelligent and gifted, is of severely restricted growth. Bemberg's parable about the need for people to pursue their own gifts and free destiny has a dénouement to startle people who feel a delicate duty of patronage towards the handicapped.

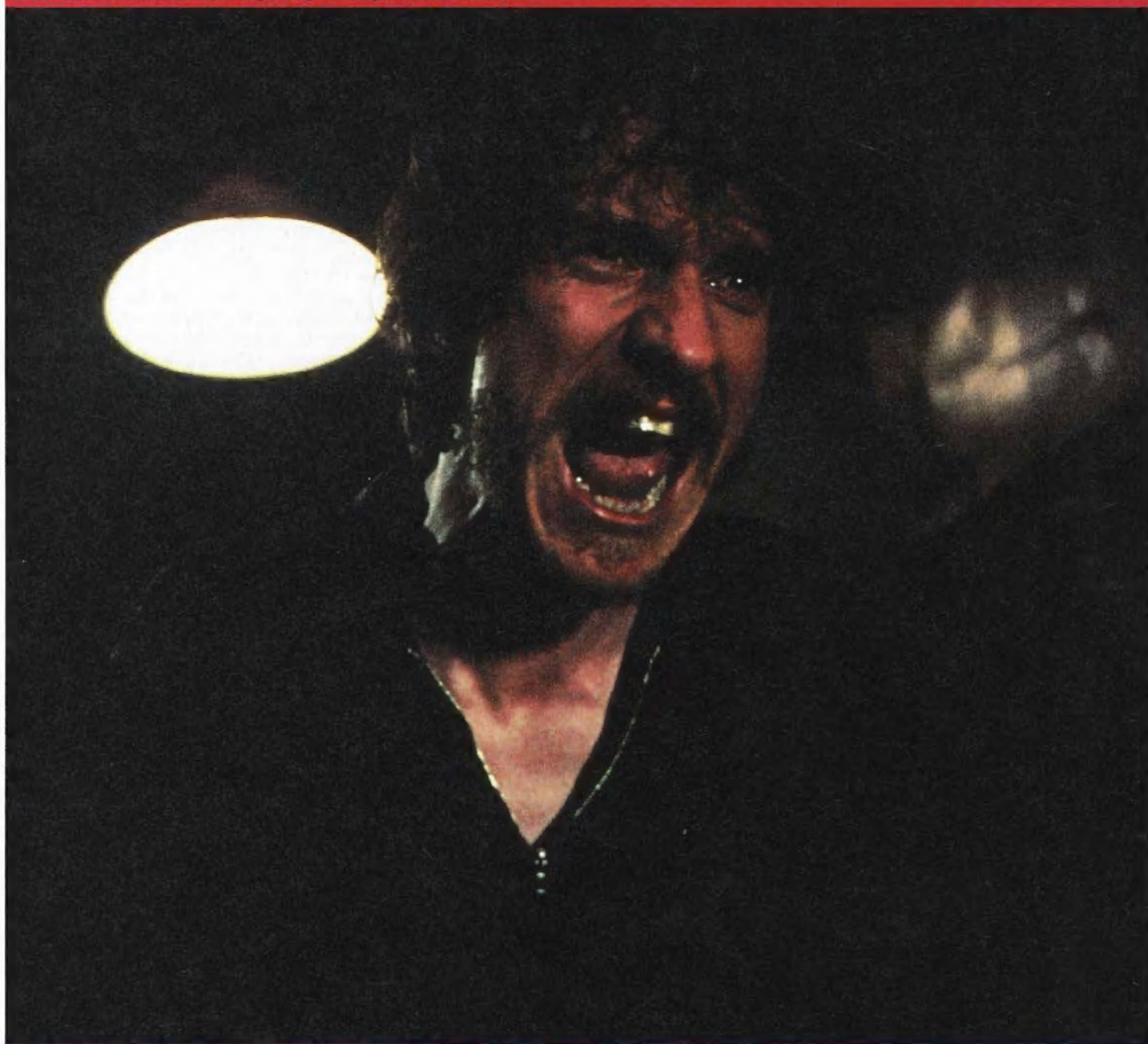
The first film of Kieslowski's tricolour trilogy, *Bleu*, was inevitably overshadowed by the film with which it shared a prize. Kieslowski's style becomes progressively more distinctive and fascinating as the meanings of his tales and the secret thoughts of his enigmatic characters become more obscure – apparently as much to himself as to his audience.

The Tadjikistan winner of the Silver Lion, Bakhtiyar Khudojnazarov's *Kosh ba Kosh*, was at least refreshing in its oddity. An offbeat love affair set in the depressed, derelict society of a one-time Soviet republic, it is ingeniously and no doubt economically staged for the most part in and around a cable-car and its control room.

A sympathetic Italian film about a man's fated love affair with an urban gypsy, Silvio Soldini's *Un'Anima Divisa in Due*, won a prize for Fabrizio Bentivoglio as best actor; and Aline Issermann's story of a 12-year-old who accuses her father of abuse was sharp and sympathetic but went unrewarded. Otherwise there was only Hollywood.

David Robinson

Unblinking sadness and comedy are the usual mix in a Mike Leigh film. Does his disturbing film 'Naked' suggest that he has abandoned British social comedy? By Andy Medhurst



MIKE LEIGH BEYOND EMBARRASSMENT

● *Naked* is a film about men who hate women, and as such it is going to anger and upset a lot of audiences. It is also a film about men who hate themselves and the world around them, a film cracking open at the seams with bile and venom and a frighteningly inexhaustible bitterness, and its power will continue to garner further accolades and acclaim after its success at Cannes. Indifference is not the response it seeks, and sexual politics will, quite rightly, be the battleground for the controversies it cannot help but instigate.

Put crudely, the question many will want to ask is whether a film that shows so many scenes of sexual violation and airs such litanies of misogynist rhetoric is, by giving them that space, endorsing those actions and views. Having seen *Naked* only once, perhaps it's too soon to decide, though I did find much of it disturbing and cruel. Yet at the moment I'm inclined to insist that *Naked* needs serious consideration, and my reasoning for this can be boiled down to two words: Mike Leigh.

This article is not intended to be a dribbling fan letter, but neither will I pretend to be dispassionate, so I'll permit myself one small paragraph of gush. When it comes to making moving (in both senses of the word) pictures that evoke the horrors and humours of being English over the past 20 years, Mike's my boy. Forget the hairy-chested, prolier-than-thou bogus heroics of Alan Bleasdale, pour Terence Davies' ghoulish stew of Fair Isle and laboriously poignant sing-songs down the nearest drain, and for heaven's sake don't let clammy Dennis Potter wheel on yet another batch of therapy sessions passed off as sixth-form Brecht – only Alan Bennett and Victoria Wood come close to matching Leigh's successes, and they too have had to look to audiences, rather than critics, for their primary recognition.

Naked should change that state of affairs – Leigh is likely to be applauded for breaking away from his reputation for small-scale, nuanced, domestic, English tragicomedies and moving on up into the rarefied arena of European art cinema – so perhaps now is the right time to try and assess exactly what he has been doing since the release of *Bleak Moments* in 1971.

There seems little if any doubt that he has produced a body of work that is both utterly distinctive and widely recognisable – the phrase 'a Mike Leigh film' immediately triggers certain images and associations. Detractors might argue that his films show not so much

consistency as indistinguishability, but then there are many great artists whose reputations rest on tirelessly reworking one small patch of territory – one thinks of Monet, Barbara Pym, the Ramones – proving that smallness of scope is no barrier to magnitude of achievement. A more contentious issue is that of Englishness. Leigh's England is far from representative, being almost exclusively white and primarily concerned with that fractious, disputed zone where upper-working-class meets lower-middle, but nonetheless his films can only fully work for audiences conversant with the details (from brand names to ingrained structures of inhibition) of the social and cultural worlds that their characters inhabit.

It could even be argued that there's an unswerving Englishness to the visual look and feel of Leigh's films, a *mise en scène* of man-made fibres, shot through filters of brick-dust and gravy. "Brown's your colour, isn't it," one Leigh girlfriend says to her boy, and the films take the hint, wading through colour-schemes of rigorous, terrifying drabness. Beauty is irrelevant to their agenda, since what they aim to convey is a sense of familiarity, though always with that slight edge of comic excess that saves them from the banality of realism. The clothes worn in the early films are now a treasure trove of embarrassed memories, an inventory of high street horrors, conjuring up with ruthless precision the days when people wore cheesecloth without irony. This England is specific, palpable and dire, though aspects of it are at the same liable to inspire a kind of wry resignation. Whatever the response however, the codes remain, through the very intricacies of their recognisability, difficult to decipher if you haven't grown up with them.

Few concessions, particularly with comic tone, are made to outsiders – a US friend left a screening of *Life is Sweet* (1990) after 20 minutes, explaining that it was just "too English". Yet there is no jingoism present (it's hardly the 'English comedy' of Jim Davidson or Bernard Manning) – if anything, Englishness is revealed as a kind of pathological condition, emotionally warping and stunting, to which the only response can be a kind of damage limitation.

What many of Leigh's films suggest is that to be English is to be locked in a prison where politeness, gaucheness and anxiety about status form the bars across the window. He makes films about traps – *Bleak Moments* is an anatomy of suffocation, a slow-motion comedy of man-

ners where people move as if underwater, while *Grown-Ups* (1980) sourly sketches the unbreakably repetitive cycles of heterosexuality – though sometimes there is a sliver-thin possibility of escape, as in the moments of quiet, rueful determination that end *High Hopes* (1988), *Life is Sweet* and *Meantime* (1983).

The most consistent aspect of his films, of course, is that whether their outcome holds out any potential for progression or not, they deploy comedy as their dominant mode – to such an extent in some cases that the unblinking sadness of their insights is frequently overlooked. The justly celebrated knockabout caricatures of *Abigail's Party* (1977) shouldn't be allowed to obscure the fact that it is also an agonising study of bullying and spite, a Barrett-starter-home version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* where niggling and goading inexorably escalate into all-out war, leaving a final tableau as full of bodies as any Jacobean tragedy. Even *Nuts in May* (1976), probably the nearest thing Leigh has made to a sheer comic treat, hides a number of troubling barbs about class antagonism and the insecurities of masculinity.

It's this deft juggling of registers that gives these films their richness of texture. Only in the early *Hard Labour*, made in 1973, is the humour left out, resulting in a piece of almost unwatchable grimness, a joyless film about a joyless life, that follows a middle-aged woman (the incomparably put-upon Liz Smith) from drudgery at work to drudgery at home. Originally shown as a BBC *Play For Today*, its failure now stands as a useful indictment of that tradition of television naturalism, with its assumption that to reproduce the hardship of a particular way of life with painstaking fidelity was somehow to inspire audiences to clamour for its amelioration. Leigh had already shown he was ahead of that game two years previously, when *Bleak Moments* had been careful to irrigate its picture of desperate, dried-up loneliness with enough well-observed absurdities to make the whole thing simultaneously hilarious and painfully moving. In the brilliantly excruciating scene where Sylvia and Peter can't quite manage to seduce each other, their hormones buckled down by the niceties of protocol, *Bleak Moments* strikes that note of self-recognising comic torture, prompting a head-in-the-hands wail of oh-no-that's-me, which Leigh can pin-point better than anyone else. *Hard Labour*, by contrast, pickles its characters in a puritanical aspic of respectful distance, ►

◀ so that in the end, although you might sympathise, you don't really care. Elsewhere, Leigh's use of the comedy of pain breaks through that impasse, shakes up the categories and forbids easy response.

His best films (*Bleak Moments*, *Grown-Ups*, *Meantime*) exemplify his skills as a choreographer of awkwardnesses, a geometrician of embarrassments, able to orchestrate layers of accumulated tiny cruelties and failures of communication until they swell into a crescendo of extravagant farce. A Leigh film typically has little in the way of 'plot', all we tend to be offered is the sight of a few people's already small, curtailed lives shrivelling and shrinking just that little bit more. He dishes up case studies of strangulation, though they are rarely without some glimmer of hope, often in the shape of characters who realise that the intricate webs of relationships in which they are caught could be made to work as a source of strength, that the ties that bind can also be the bonds that save. Most of all, however, it is the continual presence of comedy, often in the unlikeliest contexts, that keeps these films from being too wounding to bear. We wouldn't want to put ourselves through the mill of their relentless perceptions if they weren't so funny.

The humour comes partly from an acute ear for the ridiculousness of everyday conversation, the hesitations, repetitions, misunderstandings and statements of the bloody obvious that we all constantly use to ward off our fear of silence (the influence of Pinter is clear, but shorn of the portentousness). There are also understatedly droll sight gags, such as the lanky Sue dancing with the diminutive Lawrence in *Abigail's Party*, and an unfailingly shrewd use of characters' words to expose their own limitations: "There's no point in having a schedule if you don't stick to it," says Keith in *Nuts in May*, thereby damning himself as the most intolerable kind of anally retentive, train-spotting pedant. Those who dislike Leigh complain of a tendency towards cultural snobbery, an invitation for superior viewers to mock the inadequates on screen, and though there's an element of this in the way we are encouraged to scoff at how in *Abigail's Party* Beverly parades her penchant for Demis Roussos, there is a better, more telling follow-up joke in the fact that all her husband, Lawrence, can offer to trump it with is the hopelessly middlebrow James Galway – all types of taste are fair game, not just that for downmarket popular culture.



Nearly touching: Jeremy (Greg Cutwell) and Sophie (Katrin Cartlidge) in 'Naked'

Leigh's comedy works so well because it is never unmixed with other, often contradictory, emotional states and strategies. A character like Gloria in *Grown-Ups* is not simply a stereotype of the fussy, interfering spinster, she is also a figure of considerable sadness. The scene (perhaps the one piece of Leigh you'd want to put in a time capsule to sum up exactly what he did best) where she invades the house next door to her sister's and refuses to budge from the staircase works not only as a slice of irresistible farce executed with a manic precision that wouldn't disgrace the best episodes of *Fawlty Towers*, it cuts deeper because by such a late stage in the film we can relate this moment back to the way the careful nuances of character interplay were built up earlier. It's with such instances that Leigh's method of developing his script from initial improvisation sessions (a technique which most accounts of his work fetishise to the regrettable exclusion of considering its wider meanings) pays its full and shattering dividend. Brenda Blethyn's Gloria is pathetic and tragic and maddening and vulnerable and shameless and ludicrous and grotesque and heart-breaking all at the same time. Then again, those who regard Leigh's work with antipathy would probably seize on such a scene as typifying what they see as his

greatest crime – and label the performance, the scene, the film and the man as patronising.

I've lost count of the number of times I've heard the P-word used to damn what Leigh does, as if it were a four-syllable spell to ward off his evil deeds. On the two occasions (separated by seven years) that I've heard him speak in public, both times he was grilled by some sections of the audience using variations on the P-theme. The fact that such questions tended to be asked in the kind of studiously street-corner, glottally challenged voices that middle-class boys only achieve after stringent de-elocution lessons and six months' membership of their campus SWP did little to allay my suspicions that those who find Leigh patronising are only really projecting their own guilty anxieties on to the films he makes. There is a debilitating sentimentality surrounding the cultural representation of the 'working classes' in this country – as if the people lumped together under that label were an endangered species, proletarian pandas in need of protection – but Leigh doesn't toe this sanctimonious line, preferring to deliver up characters who unapologetically have tastes, manners and habits that middle-class audiences cannot help but find distressing. "Fancy going to the States and not going to Disneyland," says a surprised

Wendy in *Life is Sweet* when she hears her daughter's holiday itinerary, and whether you find that patronising or accurate rather depends, I would suggest, on how many people like Wendy you meet in the course of your everyday life. In the same way that to use the term 'escapist' as a put-down reveals that anyone who does so leads a comfortable life that requires no escaping from, so those who condemn Leigh for being 'patronising' reveal far more about their own condescending attitudes towards the kind of people who most often populate his fictions. As for me, let's just say that a lot of Leigh's films treat the kind of places I come from with tenderness and truth – and that if I wanted to see working people have their backsides patronised off them, I'd watch *Boys from the Blackstuff* or *Only Fools and Horses*.

It's also worth pointing out that the few times Leigh does succumb to facile caricature is when he wants to exercise some spleen towards the 'upper classes' – case in point being the impossibly callous Rupert and Laetitia in *High Hopes*, which is one of his weaker films, falling prey to just the kind of sentimentality about class authenticity that he avoids elsewhere. Shirley and Cyril are such snuggly bunnies of socialistic concern, all baggy jumpers and shaggy hair, that the dice are irretrievably loaded from the start, and the treatment of Cyril's upwardly aspiring sister Valerie leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. The picture of class differences drawn is at times so glib that it almost comes across like an attempt to appease those SWP-minded hecklers who squawk so wrongheadedly about the likes of *Meantime*. Reassuringly, then, the most deeply-felt scene comes when Cyril chides the crassly revolutionary Suzie for her sloganeering solutions to complicated problems and confesses his own political impotence and frustrated lack of focus. All he can be sure of is the love and support he and Shirley give each other and that, in harder times, is what we have to keep us going.

In other, more literary words, only connect – or as poor Sylvia in *Bleak Moments* so feelingly puts it, "if we could ever get around to touching one another, it wouldn't be a bad thing". The importance of mutuality, of communality, of connectedness, is the basic emotional and political wellspring of Leigh's films. The haunting and poetic *Meantime*, for me the most fully achieved film he has yet made, tentatively locates a small flame of hope in the midst of high-rise unemployment and the first hard rav-

Mike Leigh

Born 20 February 1943,
Salford, Lancashire

Feature films

Bleak Moments (1971) 111 mins
High Hopes (1988) 112 mins
Life is Sweet (1990) 103 mins
Naked (1993) 132 mins

Television

A Mug's Game (1972) a sketch on gambling for *Scene*
Hard Labour (1973)
The Permissive Society (1975)
Nuts in May (1976)
Plays For Britain (1976) title sequence only
Knock For Knock (1976)
The Kiss of Death (1977)
Abigail's Party (1977)
Who's Who (1979)
Grown Ups (1980)
Home Sweet Home (1982)
Meantime (1983)
Four Days in July (1985)
The Short & Curlies (1990)
A Sense of History (1992)

ages of Thatcherism by validating the importance of refusal, of saying no, of the dignity of resistance. The brothers Mark and Colin forge a wary, witty alliance against both the indifferent offices of the state and the dead end embodied by the skinhead Coxy, out of his brain on Special Brew, glue and years on the dole, while their aunt Barbara, at first glance another of those prim green-belt housewives whom Leigh sometimes so disparages, finds her courage in a bottle and begins the process of telling her insufferable husband just how arid and demoralising their marriage has become. In *Life is Sweet*, the film's governing trope of food arranges the characters in terms of those able to work together and pull each other through and those like the would-be restaurateur Aubrey, whose twisted fantasy of sophisticated individualism has rendered him a sad, elaborate joke. There are instructive, amusing comparisons to be made with the other British 'food film' of the same moment, Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, principally in the way that while Leigh's evocation of collective endeavour and supportive ritual reveals itself above all through the tough warmth of the ensemble acting, Greenaway treats his actors with the surgical contempt of a master butcher, draping them like so much

Five-minute films made for the BBC in 1975, transmitted 1982

Afternoon

Probation

A Light Snack

The Birth of 2001 FA Cup Final Goalie
Old Chums

Theatre

Little Malcolm and his Struggle Against the Eunuchs (1965) director only
Waste Paper Guards (1965) writer only
The Box Play (1965)
My Parents Have Gone to Carlisle/



Life is Sweet (1990)

The Last Crusade of the Five Little Nuns (1966)

Neena (1967)

Individual Fruit Pies (1968)

Down Here and Up There (1968)

Big Basil (1968)

Glum Victoria and the

Lad With Specs (1968)

Epilogue (1969)

Bleak Moments (1970)

A Rancid Pong (1971)

Wholesome Glory (1973)

The Jaws of Death (1973)

Dick Whittington and His Cat (1973)

Babies Grow Old (1974-75)

The Silent Majority (1974)

Abigail's Party (1977)

Ecstasy (1979)

Goose-Pimples (1981)

Smelling a Rat (1988)

Greek Tragedy (1989)

Additional work

Too Much of a Good Thing (radio play, recorded 1979, broadcast 1992)

TV adverts for Exchange and

Mart/Kleenex (1991)

London Film Festival Trailer (1991)

Compiled by Richard Dacre

unfortunately necessary foreground in front of his inhumanly sumptuous canvases.

Leigh's rarely-seen *Four Days in July* (1986) riskily transplants his favourite concerns to the tenser setting of Northern Ireland, and quietly makes its republican sympathies evident through its presentation of the Catholic/nationalist community as people for whom a specific political struggle has deep interpersonal roots. This is done, unfortunately, at the cost of caricaturing the Protestant/unionist figures in the film as one-dimensional, harsh and obsessive; even the jokes they tell are awash with blood. The sexual politics are more interesting, associating femininity with enduring communal values, and associating machismo with intransigence and inflexibility.

Tracing the dynamics of gender through Leigh's films produces no one position, though that at least is consistent with his shunning of simplistic social verdicts. The misogyny that many will see in *Naked* might come as a shock after the way in which the drive, the perseverance and the fortitude celebrated in *Life is Sweet* so patently flowed from the character of Wendy. In many ways the two films are opposites – the earlier being fundamentally optimistic and benevolent (pastel-coloured and sunny after the greys, browns and almost ►



Never staying still: David Thewlis as Johnny in *Naked*

Leigh prefers to deliver up characters who often have tastes, manners and habits that middle class audiences find distressing

◀ subterranean interiors Leigh favoured in the late 70s and early 80s) while *Naked* is misanthropy run wild. One could fantasise that in *Life is Sweet* David Thewlis absorbed Jane Horrocks' anger and disgust with the world in the chocolate spread he licked from her body, and now takes centre stage with it in *Naked*, where it has grown more vicious and unforgiving. Horrocks' Nicola was redeemed through motherly love and familial support, readmitted into the social world because she was made to realise she was cared about. *Naked*'s Johnny rejects all trapping of support, spurns what he sees as an emasculating network of interdependence, because he has the lonely, moody street of male art-cinema angst stretching out in front of him.

It would be short-sighted, however, to see Johnny's misogyny as an entirely new presence in Leigh's films. Significant numbers of Leigh-males had previously displayed a tendency towards threatening violence against women, particularly women who were deemed to talk too much. Angela in *Abigail's Party* confides that her husband Tony has expressed the wish to Sellotape her mouth shut, while Dick in *Grown-Ups* summarises Gloria as "yap, yap, yap, all the way through *Grandstand*". Women are only to be tolerated at all because of the demands of sexual desire (Tony finds no fault with Beverly's talkativeness because he wants to get inside her frock) and because the only alternatives, celibacy and homosexuality, cannot be seen as viable options for 'real men'. Homosexuality is a notable absence in Leigh's work, though a pretty reasonable case could be made out for *Life is Sweet*'s Natalie as a budding dyke who hasn't met the right girl yet. Homosociality, however – the emotional economy through which heterosexual men have their most deep and nourishing relationships with each other while anxiously shoring up their masculinity through structures of sexism and homophobia – is another matter, and at least one of Leigh's films is an exemplary homosocial text.

Made in 1976 and tracing the tensions between two late-teenage couples, Ronnie and Sandra and Linda and Trevor, *The Kiss of Death* has much in the way of bad haircuts and worse wallpaper and stilted conversations in shabby pubs to delight any Leigh aficionado. Trevor is another of those men who think women talk too much, and though on the whole he merely shares wordless jokes about this with Ronnie, he shows enough undercurrents of menace to mark him down as one of *Naked* Johnny's tem-

peramental predecessors. Unlike Johnny, however, he has someone to turn to when women's yammering all gets too much, and in a conclusion ripe with subtexts he drives off to the seaside with Ronnie in a stolen wedding limousine still festooned with all the paraphernalia of conjugality – so does the fact that we never see them arrive in Blackpool hint at a certain anxiety about the details of the sleeping arrangement should they book into a hotel? Leaving such feverish speculations aside, what demonstrably links this generally amiable film to *Naked* is their shared, specific gendering of the trap motif Leigh uses so frequently: the trap is female, women are out to snare you, and domesticity equals a kind of death.

Trevor and Ronnie, we can only assume, will return home to the girls, and Ronnie at least will settle down to married predictability, perhaps in time emulating the ghastly Mr Thornley in *Hard Labour*, forcibly exacting his Saturday-night sexual tribute with all the finesse of a steamroller. Trevor, though, already reads too many books and if he decides to throw in his job with the undertaker (a knowing nod here to *Billy Liar*) he could decide on a career of alienation and sexual violence and change his name to Johnny.

Ironically, given the hostility noted above towards women's words, in *Naked* Johnny is the one who never shuts up. He speaks in endless, ornate, spiralling paragraphs of bad jokes, abuse and self-justification. He is a scrofulous autodidact, a polysyllabic bully on the run in London having raped a woman in Manchester. He likes rough sex, not the currently fashionable 'transgressions' of sado-masochism, but non-consensual sexual violence, where the more pain the woman unwillingly feels, the more he enjoys it. This taste is shared by the reptilian businessman Jeremy, except that he has a mobile phone and drinks champagne, so that (shades of *High Hopes*) he adds economic abuse to the sexual kind, presumably making him 'worse' than Johnny who, as a Cardboard City philosopher, is indulged by the film to a rather frightening degree – he might be a rapist but at least he's not posh. The third principal male character is Brian, a security guard with biblical leanings, fond of referring to women as 'whores and harlots' (he also goes in for some serious homosocial bonding, alternately buddyish and competitive, with Johnny).

It's tempting, in the face of such an oppressive stockpile of male abusiveness, to dismiss or

excuse *Naked* as Leigh clearing his system of juices stored up during the making of more sexually democratic films, but its wallow in narcissistic male suffering is disappointingly protracted and uncritical. After a while, you find yourself counting the self-conscious gestures towards other stories of wandering, phallocentric ennui, for not only is it a kind of British underclass road movie, it also gives Johnny a monkey fixation to match that of David Warner in the archetype 60s slab of mad-male-artist self-congratulation *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment*, while both a copy of *The Odyssey* and a verbal reference to the *Via Dolorosa* are dropped in as yet more weighty baggage. It would like to be a *bildungsroman*, except Johnny's too in love with the squalid glamour of his doomed trajectory to do any *bildung*.

And where are the women? Fucked, hiding and bleeding, basically, peripheral or allegorical in this remorselessly male landscape, although there is a later and somewhat jarring comic turn in the shape of the nurse Sandra (three parts *Grown-Up*'s Gloria to one part *Mean-time*'s Barbara). There are important women's stories to be unearthed from the wreckage, though, especially that of Johnny's sometime girlfriend Louise, who is prepared to take him on, self-effacingly to offer him healing and comfort, until he scents the closing trap and bolts for the closing credits.

In no way could *Naked* be described as a 'bad' film – it has too much razoring, blistering intensity for that, harder to shift from your mind than Gloria was to shift from a sofa, and Thewlis' lethal performance makes Johnny an unforgettable bastard, a real star turn of a shit. But he's a shit nonetheless, and *Naked* is a worrying corner for Mike Leigh to turn. I don't for a moment think that the man responsible for some of the most complex and important female roles in recent British cinema is now going to ply new trade as its premier misogynist, but I do worry that *Naked* might give him an open passport to the European art cinema club, and there are already more than enough self-serving solipsistic little boys pulling faces in that particular mirror. British social comedy is far more important – and it needs all the talents it can get. Come home, Mike, even after *Naked* all could be forgiven.

'Naked' opens on 5 November. 'Life is Sweet'/'The Short & Curlies' is available on Image Video. Leigh's new play, 'It's a Great Big Shame!', is at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East from 13 October to 20 November

Andy Medhurst will be appearing at the following venues in a series of on-stage debates to accompany a touring retrospective of Mike Leigh's films:
Newcastle: Tyneside Cinema (091 232 8289) 23 October
Bristol: Watershed Media Centre (0272 253845) 19 November
Hull: Hull Screen (0482 25017/883015) 27 November
Bradford: Bradford Film Theatre (0274 820666) 28 November

Glasgow: Glasgow Film Theatre (041 332 8128) 3 December
Coventry: Warwick Arts Centre (0203 524524) 7 December
Selected films from the Mike Leigh retrospective will also be playing at:
Manchester: Cornerhouse (061 228 2463)
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How innovative is Disney's 'Aladdin'? Why is film so often drawn to the story?

By Leslie Felperin Sharman

NEW ALADDINS FOR OLD

Moving illusions: the Genie, with his ponytail, above; Jafar, with his snarl, above right; Aladdin, with his smile, below



Along with several other movies of the last few years, Disney's latest film, *Aladdin*, marks animation's return to the mainstream. Once upon a time, everyone who went to the movies watched animation. In the earliest days of cinema, before the phrase 'animated cartoon' was coined, shorts in which wiggly lines formed faces as if by magic – for example Stuart J Blackton's *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906) – were shown alongside the live-action Western scenes and one-gag comedy skits that built the cinema.

One of the earliest versions of the Aladdin story, *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* (1906) is a trick film which relies for its special effects on the marriage between live action and animation techniques, such as hand-tinting and stopping the camera to create the illusion of genies appearing as if by magic. Back then, all moving pictures seemed startling feats of prestidigitation, and to see inanimate objects move must have been hardly less miraculous than to watch the projected shadows of living people. Even in the golden age of the 30s and 40s, cartoon shorts were still exhibited alongside live-action features. Sergei Eisenstein, musing on the work of Walt Disney, wrote in 1941 that, "Truly all ages – from children to the elderly, all nationalities, all races and all types of social systems are intoxicated by him with the same delight, surrender with the same fervour to his charm, with the same ecstasy allow themselves to be carried away by Disney's living drawings." Not long afterwards, animation went into eclipse, practically only children watched cartoons, and the Disney Company began to shift money and energy into its theme parks as the quality of its animated features slowly declined.

Following the extraordinary success of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *The Little Mermaid* in the late 80s, film-makers, viewers and scholars have been returning with interest to the field of animation. Yet its success can hardly be explained by a burgeoning population of seven-year-olds. Shifts in audience taste and aesthetic expectations, not just demographics, are at least part of the answer. The success of *Jurassic Park*, which relies heavily on animation for its crowd-pleasing special effects, perhaps indicates a new craving for the miraculous in film, for the pleasure of viewing the impossible made visible. Given the similarity between the two films' use of computer technology, it would seem that the gap between animation and live action may be narrowing once again. Though built from paint, ink and computer graphics, *Aladdin*, with its human (rather than animal) characters and love story, is closer to the emotionally engaging terrain of live-action genres such as musicals, adventures and romantic comedies than to an abstract animated film such as Norman McLaren's *Begone Dull Care* (1949).

De Niro to Dumbo

In a feature of this kind, the tension between the need for realism in terms of movement and the plasticity the animated form offers can fracture the unity. Compared with Fleischer's version of *Gulliver's Travels in Lilliput* (1938), in which the look of the rotoscoped (traced over footage of a real actor) figure of Gulliver jars with the caricatured bodies of the Lilliputians, *Aladdin* is more visually of a kind. Yet this tension remains in so far as *Aladdin*, realistically modelled late in production to suggest Tom Cruise, is still slightly at odds with the freer



style of other characters inspired by the drawing style of Erté and *New York Times* caricaturist Al Hirschfield.

Marvel as one might at the fluidity of the movement, the density of the modelling and the quality of the perspectival rendering, one is ever conscious that this "whole new world", as the theme song puts it, is essentially artificial. Paradoxically, it is at the moments when live-action conventions and spatial representation are mimicked that this artifice is most apparent. A pedlar, voiced, like the Genie, by Robin Williams, opens the film with a direct address to the audience reminiscent of Jiminy Cricket's opening speech in *Pinocchio*. "Come closer", he invites us, and at his behest the 'camera' squashes up against his nose. This gag works as much due to the comically squashed face as to our recognition that the impact of the camera is an illusion. In animation, the camera never really moves.

Fashioned from an already hybrid medium, *Aladdin* plays with pastiche to a far greater degree than recent Disney features. If its parodic quality seems congruent with the current Hollywood trend for jokey self-consciousness, one ought also to remember that parody has been a staple of cartoons since Felix the Cat mimicked Charlie Chaplin. *Aladdin* is a film with a strong sense of its own history, stuffed with references and allusions to other films as well as to other sources.

The Genie is the main locus of *Aladdin's* in-jokes, continually disrupting the quasi-oriental medieval world with anachronisms. His presence provides the spectator with an ongoing game of spot-the-reference as he transforms into Arnold Schwarzenegger, Robert De Niro in

Taxi Driver, *Pinocchio*, William F. Buckley, Cab Calloway, the Devil from *Fantasia*, Arsenio Hall, Ed Sullivan, Groucho Marx, Jack Nicholson, and a Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade announcer, to name but a few. Meanwhile, there are guest appearances from Sebastian the crab from *The Little Mermaid*, a pink elephant from *Dumbo*, and a plug for Disneyland at the film's end. Dedicated film buffs can impress their friends by pointing out the appearances of the directors, John Musker and Ron Clements, and studio executive Jeffrey Katzenberg as extras in the crowd during the 'Prince Ali' number.

Nancy Reagan's Gulf War

While children will no doubt enjoy the clowning, a lot of them won't understand many of the jokes. *Aladdin* thus marks a significant break in the way the studio conceives of its audience. Uncle Walt used to say that his films were made not just for kids, but for the child within us all. Katzenberg, who oversaw the film's production, has been frank about his aims to differentiate the studio's product and to target new audience segments rather than win souls. And much as he reveres the Disney animated classics of the past, Katzenberg pragmatically acknowledges that, "stylistic left-turns such as *Aladdin* are essential if the animation division, with well over 700 artists, is to remain vital".

At times, *Aladdin* seems to offer less a stylistic left-turn than a U-turn back to an older style of film-making. Whereas live-action musicals fell out of favour or became realistic after the 50s, animated features kept the torch burning. The musical numbers in *Aladdin* veer between *Kismet*-kitsch spectacle and contemporary bal-

ladry. The best song, 'Friend Like Me', whose lyrics were written by the late Howard Ashman, is accompanied by a production number on a Busby Berkeley scale. Ashman, who also wrote the lyrics for *The Little Shop of Horrors*, is generally acknowledged to have had the idea of making a film of the tale. The musical aspect was central to its conception, and it is Ashman's lyrics that have been central to the controversy which has surrounded in particular the opening song, 'Arabian Nights':

"I come from a land/ From a faraway place/ Where the caravan camels roam./ Where they cut off your ears/ If they don't like your face./ It's barbaric, but hey, it's home."

Indonesians found these lyrics so offensive that the film was withdrawn there until they were excised, and many of the dubbed prints for Europe will not include them. Like the protagonists of *The Producers*, the makers of *Aladdin* have discovered that one of the best ways to offend is to trivialise serious issues with musical comedy, an offence *Aladdin* has further compounded by being animated, and therefore trivial *prima facie*.

The *Aladdin* controversy centres on its depiction of Islamic and oriental culture. Some might think it ludicrous to expect cultural accuracy from an animated cartoon; others contend that it is precisely because of its medium that the film should be questioned. As the Disney Studio discovered during the Second World War, animation is a highly effective tool for propaganda, its cosy, innocuous image having a special power to palliate unpleasantries and validate stereotypes. There are some cartoons from the 30s and 40s which are now almost never shown because of their

◀ racism – *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944), or *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs* (1943). In fact, the first, and so far as I know only, animated short to be censored by the Hays Office at the time of its production was Warner Bros' *Clean Pastures* (1937), a parody of *The Green Pastures* (1936) which was seen as potentially offensive in its depiction of black Southern Baptist religion.

Whether or not *Aladdin* is racist is something viewers will have to decide for themselves. Some may feel that it caricatures Arabian people as violent and slavishly obedient to barbaric laws, as when a street trader threatens to cut off Jasmine's hand when she offers an apple to a street urchin without paying for it. But which is the distortion, the trader's unjust retribution or Jasmine's generosity? Throughout the film laws are figured as arbitrary and whimsical. The Sultan insists that his daughter must marry a prince by her birthday, only cheerfully to repeal the edict at the end. Is this also a sleight at the Islamic judicial system, or just a way of resolving the story with the casual conclusiveness the musical comedy form demands? And what are we to make of the film's villain, Jafar, whose anorexic shape is said to be modelled in part on Nancy Reagan and who quotes two phrases of George Bush – "there's a new order now", when he temporarily takes over the lamp and political power, and later "read my lips"? Given that the film was in production during the Gulf War, is Jafar to be read as part of a hidden liberal subtext that implicitly criticises America's use of power, or is he just another stereotypical example of the myth of the devious, manipulative Arab statesman, who like Saddam Hussain steals a kingdom, and is called the "Thief of Baghdad"?

Even the visual style of the film is a hybridisation of oriental and western imagery, to the point where it becomes difficult to divine where incorporation ends and appropriation begins. The studio-sponsored book *Aladdin: The Making of an Animated Film* asserts that the production designers "developed the style of Aladdin from the study of Persian miniature paintings from approximately 100 to 1500 AD; various Victorian paintings of eastern cultures, numerous photo-essay and coffee-table books

on the Middle East; Disney animated films from the mid-Forties to the mid-Fifties, and Alexander Korda's 1940 film, *The Thief of Bagdad*". It also describes how Rasoul Azadani, the film's layout supervisor, used photographs of his home town in Iran for locale design. Just as other elements of the film are caught in a play between realism and fantasy, so is its "look" imbued by a play between fidelity to Arabic design and the adaptation of western-derived imagery of the east. If animators are now more sensitive to how they depict ethnic groups, perhaps those who worked on *Aladdin* felt entitled to slacken the reins of caution when it came to a story so deeply assimilated into western folklore and performance tradition.

Fleischer's Popeye the sailor

Ever since the publication of the *Arabian Nights* in translation in the early eighteenth century, Aladdin has been excerpted along with the stories of Sindbad and Ali Baba. The story was often adapted by didactic writers to make moral points about greed and the use of power. Its transferral to the stage as a pantomime grafted on a new set of traditions. Like other pantos, it became a vehicle for topical comment and parody, a tradition the film affectionately revises. The constituent elements of harem pants, magic lamps and three wishes provided exotic trappings through which more domestic issues of sexual and class conflicts could masquerade. Thus the mythical terrain in which these cumulative versions of *Aladdin* are set is culturally neither east nor west, but a fairyland amalgamation of the two. This latest version, with its multitude of references to American popular culture overlaid with the look of the Orient, is squarely in this tradition.

There have been at least three attempts to turn the Aladdin story into a feature length animated film. The first, by Walter Lantz's studio, was aborted in the 30s when production proved too costly. The second was a visually striking but lacklustre attempt by the UPA studio, *1001 Arabian Nights* (1959), in which Mr Magoo appears as Aladdin's uncle Abdul Aizziz Magoo. The third version, *Aladin et la Lampe Merveilleuse* (1969), was directed by Jean Image.

Little and large: 3 Sabu as Abu in 'The Thief of Bagdad' (1940)

The latest version of the story owes less to these features than it does to animated shorts of the 30s and 40s. The Warner Bros' animated short, *A-Lad-in His Lamp*, directed by Robert McKimson in 1948, also maps this terrain. Here Bugs Bunny finds Aladdin's lamp while digging a hole. The Genie with the Light Brown Hare (geddit?) whisks him off to Baghdad, which like elements in *Aladdin* is figured as a hybrid America-East, somewhere near "Veronica Lake" and Iraq. There we see a turban-shaped restaurant called the Brown Turban, echoing the hat-shaped Brown Derby restaurant which was a Hollywood landmark. The film is full of such gags – used magic carpet lots, the palace of Caliph Hassan Feffer – which marry puns on American and eastern words and concepts.

Three Fleischer films based on the *Arabian Nights*, *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad the Sailor* (1936) and *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves* (1937) and *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp* (1939) are supported by a similar comic infrastructure. For example in the latter, Popeye is baffled by a menu offered by a gibberish-speaking Arab waiter that appears to be written in a caricature of Arabic. When the waiter folds down the corners, it reveals the caption "Bacon + Eggs 45c", a somewhat blasphemous joke at that. *Aladdin* is a little more respectful of Arab culture, but shares a similar attitude towards Arabic calligraphy, using shapes based on it for the Genie's smoke effects, suggesting that Arabic is a kind of conjurer's word-magic, as inscrutable as its speakers.

Another significant part of the heritage of visual renditions of *Arabian Nights* stories is their association with theatricality, special effects and spectacle. Nineteenth-century productions often relied on intricate machinery to make magic carpets fly and puffs of smoke dissolve into genies. In animation, the stories have inspired the exploration of novel effects such as the stereo-optic process used in the two Popeye films to create a curious depth effect and enhance the magical qualities of the text. Animators are often portrayed as cinematic magicians, a metaphor which continually crops up in film publicity. This has been no less the case with *Aladdin*, where the movie's publicity



Illusions of magic:
1 'Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse', a mix of live action and animation;
2 Douglas Fairbanks in 'The Thief of Bagdad' (1924)



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machine continually elides the use of technology with the "Genie-us" of the film-makers, boldly making new strides in computer graphics in order to animate magic carpets.

As with *Jurassic Park*, this promotion of technology harks back to the earliest days of film when, in Tom Gunning's phrase, the "cinema of attractions" emphasised the seductive spectacle of cinematic technology itself – embodied in the trick film – as a pleasure equal to, if not more important than, the pleasure of narrative diegesis. Film itself was likened to an imaginative kingdom of magic, as the title of one of the earliest books on Hollywood, Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights* (1926), suggests. Here, the metaphoric relation between cinema and the imaginary terrain of *Arabian Nights* is explicit. "The genii have answered the wish of the World with the Aladdin's Lamp of the camera and the Magic Carpet of the film," Ramsaye concludes.

Nostalgia for the Orient

A psychoanalytic perspective might suggest that the stories from the *Arabian Nights* have provided a safe framework for film-makers to explore the fantastic, the uncanny desires for the impossible which realist cinema seeks to rationalise and repress. The stories' 'Magical East' setting, remote in both time and distance, provides further buttressing against the potentially disruptive notion of phenomena which cannot be contained by the discourse of science. By extension, such texts can also sanction notions about cultural difference that support more direct political ends. When almost the only fictional films one sees about 'the Orient' figure it as irrational, enchanted and medieval, it becomes easier to accept the purported necessity of subjugating that culture to western power. The Nazi version of *Baron Münchhausen* was motivated as much by the desire to create a diverting spectacle for its audience close to the end of the war as it was to legitimise Germany's interests and affiliations with Iraq. The nineteenth-century story conveniently concerns a Germanic conquest of the Turks through superior magical technology.

The two versions of *The Thief of Bagdad*, which

in many ways inspired *Aladdin*, were not directly sponsored by a government, as was *Münchhausen*, yet they are tainted in their own way by the project of validating western imperialism. Edward Said, in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, calls for the necessity of "contrapuntal" readings of cultural texts, which "must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of texts to include what was once forcibly excluded." Though Said's exposition mainly concerns literature, his approach can usefully be extended to film. For example, the 1924 version of *The Thief of Bagdad*, starring Douglas Fairbanks, can be seen as retrenching imperialist-orientalist conceptions of the east as magical and remote at a time when Britain was brutally quelling resistance to its colonial rule of Iraq. Like *Münchhausen*'s victory over the Turks, the climactic expulsion of the 'Mongol' usurper by Douglas Fairbanks' character works to legitimise western military supremacy.

Similarly the 1940 version, directed by Alexander Korda in Hollywood, was made at a time when Iraq, a formerly British-controlled country, was in collaboration with the Nazis. The Germanic Conrad Veidt plays Jaffar, a power-crazed vizier who wrests control of the country from the rightful king, played by the British actor John Justin. The hero is assisted by his cheeky sidekick Abu, played by the Indian-born actor Sabu. Read "contrapuntally", it becomes obvious that this wartime text subtly articulates the struggle of two imperial powers, the Axis and the Allied, over the Middle East, embodied as a beautiful but helpless princess, and aided by the happy collaboration of other colonial dominions like India. The fact that these texts are set in a historic or mythic time and place based on the east does not so much undermine their imperialist "structure of attitude and reference", in Said's phrase, as underline it. By universalising cultures like the Orient, imperialist texts show them to be malleable and transportable, clay to be moulded for the entertainment of the west. Said notes of nineteenth-century literary works set in the empire that, "subaltern cultures were exhibited

before Westerners as microcosms of the larger imperial domain." Filmic representations of "subaltern cultures" work in just the same way.

Disney's *Aladdin* borrows many things from these two versions of *The Thief of Bagdad*: names like Jaffar and Abu, the look of actors like Conrad Veidt, imagery, and most importantly the desire to exhibit the Orient as a microcosm of the imperial domain in fancy dress. The decision to remake the Aladdin story during a time when the Middle East is so politically volatile suggests an underlying nostalgia for orientalist narratives which offer heroes and villains rather than the morally ambiguous characters we have on the world stage today.

Freeing the genie

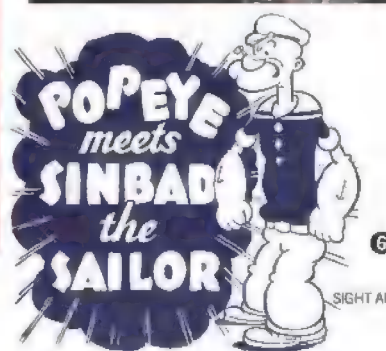
The cultural project of imperialism still weighs heavily on the present. Yet Disney's *Aladdin* adapts its heritage to produce a more self-critical reading of western imperialism. One of the film's directors, Ron Clements, has discussed how the film revises its sources to offer a more anti-materialist message. "The original story was sort of a winning the lottery kind of thing... like an 80s 'greed is good' movie... we tried to put a spin on it. Like having anything you could wish for may seem like the greatest thing in the world. But things are never quite what they seem."

The presence of this revisionist ideology is clear in the portrait of the Genie. A force neither wholly for good nor for evil, he is a slave to whoever uses the lamp. His ground rule that he can't kill people is somewhat undermined by the fact that he can clearly give others, like Jafar, the power to do so themselves. Like guns, genies don't kill people; people kill people. Aladdin's granting of the Genie's freedom at the film's end, unprecedented in any earlier version of the story, can be read as an abandonment of the desire for such double-edged 'magical technology', a metaphor for disarmament. As this article is being written, Israel and the PLO are working through their peace accord agreements. Let us hope that the pacifist and Utopian ending of *Aladdin* is as prophetic as its telling is pleasurable.

'Aladdin' opens on 19 November

Animated tales:

- 4 Heath Robinson's illustrations of 'Aladdin';
- 5 Mr Mago in '1001 Arabian Nights' (1959);
- 6 Fleischer's 'Popeye meets Sinbad the Sailor' (1936);
- 7 Jean Image's 'Aladin et la Lampe Merveilleuse' (1969)





FOUR DAYS IN OCTOBER

A television complex ablaze; Boris Yeltsin drinking tea; the surrender of the rebels – these were the images played out across our television screens. Julian Graffy has been comparing Russian and British versions

It's a bit of a shock switching on the television and seeing your tram in the line of fire. The B tram, fondly known as the *bukashka*, the bug, for its reliably dawdling pace, was my usual means of transport in Moscow this summer. I'd get on where my friends live near Spiridonovka (rejoicing in getting its name back after loaning it for years to the "Red Count" Aleksei Tolstoj), and go along the Inner Ring Road, past the house where they shot *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears*, past the new and vastly expensive Reebok shop, past the US embassy, maybe getting off at Smolenskii bul'var to look at the second-hand book stalls; at the next stop to visit friends whose 15-year-old son is a contender for World's Greatest Tolkien Expert; or perhaps going on as far as the Crimean Bridge to look at the awful pictures on sale to tourists opposite the entrance to Gorky Park. This is central Moscow. It's a bit like seeing Piccadilly and the Bayswater Road under siege, and safely-frustratingly, back in London I've been running between British and Russian television screens, taping one while watching the other, pictures swirling in my head.

British television footage of the extraordinary four days in Moscow at the beginning of October was a triumph of flawless editing, history encapsulated almost as it happened. Russian television's coverage was naturally much fuller, able to develop its narratives, but much clumsier in its cuts and links. Viewers got expansive human interest stories – the wounded in hospital, interviews with young conscripts, an extended sequence on the devastating attack on the television centre at a time when London had already turned its attentions to the squabbling Blackpool Tories. BBC journalists had recourse to handy shorthand – this,

they said, was the "Second October Revolution", conveniently forgetting that the first had happened in Petrograd and in November. (During the Soviet succession crises of the mid-80s, the *Sun* offered its readers the helpful headline "Tsar Wars!"). Russian commentaries were more rhetorical, more concerned to draw out the moral implications of the unfolding drama.

But it is the images rather than the words – the Ostankino television complex ablaze, troops on the Ring Road, breaking rank and turning tail, parliament's defenders giving the Fascist salute and, later, old women stepping gingerly around corpses – that have seared these events into our consciousness. Most of these images revolve around the White House – the barricades, the circling tanks, the blown out windows and the charred walls, the lemon vodka and Alka Seltzer discovered in "President" Rutskoi's lair. For Muscovites, the sight of Rutskoi and his colleague, the parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, being led out of the building under arrest and then along the labyrinthine corridors of the legendary Lefortovo prison was a particularly potent image of reversal. For Western viewers the visual reversals from August 1991 – Yeltsin was defending the White House then, now he was bombing it, Rutskoi was standing on the balcony then calling for its defence, now he was asking them to march on the Kremlin – offered a concise symbolic history lesson. The changing symbolic significance of the grandiose building near the Moscow river is all there in its name. For years it was known as the Russian Federation Building or the Russian Parliament. In 1991, with Boris Yeltsin representing the birth of legitimate democracy in Russia, it became, self-consciously, the ("our") White House. By

this August, at the second anniversary of the coup, it was a place disdained, as sober reality had long since replaced euphoria. Now Moscow wags are calling it the "Black and White House", an eloquent memorial to blind ambition.

The recent upheavals in Eastern Europe have been played out before the eyes of the world – the journalists with their cameras, the viewers with their video recorders – and constant replaying of certain images has distilled them into a shorthand code for the events of 1989: a wall in Prague with the laconic message "It's over – Czechs are free"; young men chipping at another wall in Berlin; Nicolae Ceaucescu's dawning realisation that the crowds he was haranguing at a Bucharest rally were actually jeering at him; the Romanian tricolour with a circular hole where its hated Communist insignia had once been.

The Eiffel Tower

There were no photojournalists around for the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917, and no pictures to crystallise history being made. So permission was given for the theatre director Nikolai Evreinov to stage a huge re-enactment of the event in 1920. Now the image of the Revolution existed. The story was told again for the tenth anniversary of the revolution in Eisenstein's *October*, and by now the propagandist possibilities of re-imagining, re-imaging, were clear to a regime wedded to the management of news. When Stalin sanctioned a full-scale re-enactment of the sacking of the Reichstag for Mikhail Chiaureli's 1950 film *The Fall of Berlin*, he was confident enough in the power of the image to end it with an apotheosis – his own emergence, dressed all in white, from a large white plane, to congratu-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL TOZER

The second time around:
a Russian journalist reads the
news, as he receives it, left;
4 October, the White House
burns, second left; Rutskoi
and Khasbulatov leave
the White House for Lefortovo
prison, second right;
tanks triumphant, right

late his men – that was entirely apocryphal.

As television became the main information medium in the USSR, state management in the form of censorship was absolute. But manipulation of the images themselves remained unsophisticated – the notorious main 9pm news broadcast, *Vremia*, was presented by starched dummies, their delivery stiff, their pages of notes visible in front of them as they told “respected comrades” the events of another drear Soviet day. Mikhail Gorbachev gradually learnt to glow in the camera’s embrace. His deputy, and the leader of the August 1991 putsch, self-styled “President” Yanaev, knew full well that capturing the television station was imperative. But he didn’t realise that the camera’s all-seeing eye would beam his sense of his own lese-majesty across the nation – his nervously drumming fingers during the putschists’ press conference and the ill-fitting grey suits of his lieutenants are key images of those days.

So too, of course, is the sight of Boris Yeltsin standing on a tank outside the Moscow White House in 1991. And in the end it was Yeltsin’s side which had all the best images. Anti-putsch journalist were not idle in the days they were denied access to the airwaves, and when their adrenalin-driven footage was broadcast later that week – burning barricades and corpses on the Ring Road, the Russian tricolour in all shapes and sizes, Mstislav Rostropovich inside the threatened White House, awkwardly cradling the weapon of the sleeping young soldier meant to guard him – they quickly became a potent mnemonic code. For a generation of young and not so young Russian news journalists, 1991 was their finest hour.

Two year later, Russian television is an odd

hybrid. The news remains vivid and well informed, but it often seems to be drowning in a sea of tawdry pop videos (usually directed by the sons of Nikita Mikhalkov and Sergei Bondarchuk), American soaps (what is *Santa Barbara*?) and ludicrously inappropriate Western advertisements for *Snickers* and *Bounty Bars*, *Marlboro* and *Wash and Go*. But Boris Yeltsin has been astute enough to make sure that the television channels, and particularly Channel 1 at Ostankino, are offering a pro-Presidential line. The parliament, it’s true, used to have an early-evening *Parliamentary Hour*, but watching the rancorous posturings of the deputies one wondered if it wasn’t all part of an elaborate plot to discredit them. And when Yeltsin closed down the parliament on 21 September, and put an end to “Parliamentary Hour”, as well as the Parliament’s newspaper and radio station, television of course provided the medium for his address to the nation – a stagy affair. ■ bit like the Queen’s Christmas message with a histrionic pause for ■ sip of tea calculated to counter rumours of his liking for vodka. It was not surprising, therefore, that Rutskoi’s call for rebellion should first target the Ostankino television complex, its tower a landmark in north Moscow known affectionately as “our Eiffel Tower”. Partly they wanted their access to the airwaves back; partly they wanted pyromaniac revenge, though breaking into the middle of the Sunday football was probably not a good idea. Tellingly, too, the few other attempts to occupy buildings around the country were directed at the media – the Itar-TASS building in Moscow, St Petersburg television, the radio station in Cheliabinsk.

October 1993 was both more and less dangerous than August 1991. It was much more

lethal in its weaponry and in its casualty figures, but it was always less likely to succeed. The role of the crowd, too, was different. In 1991, huge pro-Yeltsin crowds took to the streets and held demonstrations by the White House in the rain. This year, symptomatically, crowds spectated from ■ nearby bridge, our representatives in the cheaper seats, until sent scurrying for their lives by sniper fire. Meanwhile, others, glimpsed extras on the edge of the frame, were carrying on their lives, going to work, doing the shopping in ■ war zone.

Sly truths

A picture is supposed to be worth a thousand words. But of course it doesn’t necessarily tell all, or any, of the truth. It can tell *your* truth, as Boris Yeltsin knows. That’s why he removed the honour guard from Lenin’s mausoleum. Earlier, pictures of Rostropovich conducting Tchaikovsky for him in Red Square were both a sign of his Russian patriotism and confirmation that, two years on, Boris was still the good guy. (This was not the only way Yeltsin mobilised the artists. The ghastly amplified rhythms of Oleg Gazmanov’s *Putana*, with its hook “Prostitute, prostitute, prostitute, hotel lights are so attractive”, had earlier been used to stop the White House sleeping.) But a picture can also slyly tell a truth you didn’t pay much attention to. One reading of the events in Moscow in October makes them the stuff of tragedy – hubris led surely to nemesis. Another offers sartorial allegory. Ruslan Khasbulatov revealed to the world his unfortunate penchant for black shirts. “President” Rutskoi announced his agenda to save Russia clad in Adidas jogging gear. Between them they were clearly no match for Yeltsin’s power suits.

● Think of spring. Spring 1993, to be exact. Visiting my friend Holly's painting studio, I discovered a wall of toy guns and holsters from the 50s, testimony to her childhood passion. And not just hers. When my friend Judith comes to New York, she insists on eating at the Cowgirl Hall of Fame, a restaurant in the Village that serves perfectly passable food but is really frequented by grown women with cowgirls on the brain who deem digestion more pleasurable when surrounded by the cowgirl kitsch of some half-dozen decades. Even my friend Kate, who grew up in Amarillo and used to answer to the name of Tex, returned to her roots (sort of) to make a little videotape titled *Queers on Steers*. Now, Holly's six-gun wall has been around for ages, Kate shot that footage a while back, and even the Cowgirl Hall of Fame wasn't nearly new – but suddenly Holly and Judith and Kate's tastes were hip and fresh instead of outré. Dear reader, you're uh, *forgiven* if you think you know why.

Yes, Clint swept the Oscars and, going one step forward, cowgirls were now a good idea. The wonder, I suppose, is why it took so long, given the prevalence of cowgirl myths in girlhood fantasy, for the subject to dawn on LA. No matter: suddenly the name of the very up-market Rodeo Drive took on new meaning and, if the trades were to be believed, LA overnight turned downright cowgirl-sque. *Variety* didn't

give a damn if generations of American girls had been busy dreaming up cowgirls of their own. There were deals to be made.

Maggie Greenwald and Gus Van Sant were ahead of the pack. She had just finished directing Suzy Amis in *The Ballad of Little Jo* and he already had directed and edited Uma Thurman and company in *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. But rumours and trade stories about new female westerns appeared in the press nearly every week in early summer. Tim Hunter was set to do one called (really) *Guns'n'Roses* with various rumoured actresses, at one point including (really) Sharon Stone. Producer Denise Di Novi had teamed up with John Duigan to do *Outlaws* for Columbia. Tamra Davis was hired to direct *Bad Girls*, a five-prostitute western for which she picked actresses like *One False Move*'s Cynda Williams and *Guncrazy* star Drew Barrymore.

By September, the hot weather was over and so was the hot trend. Tim Hunter's project was a no-go, *Outlaws* was put on hold, and Tamra Davis was fired from *Bad Girls* along with cinematographer Lisa Rinzler and actress Cynda Williams. What was left? The two independent productions. *The Ballad of Little Jo* had an OK run, while *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* caused early consternation on the festival circuit. Meanwhile, for this writer, as for others before me, the air began to swirl with new tumbleweeds: ideas about female westerns, what they are, the

genre to which they claim to belong, and the reasons why the road to putting cowgirls on the screen leads to such a rough ride.

Renegade Westerns

"The Western hero, who seems to ride in out of nowhere, in fact comes riding in out of the nineteenth century... Every word he doesn't say, every creed in which he doesn't believe is absent for a reason.... The point-for-point contrast between a major popular form of the twentieth century and the major popular form of the nineteenth is not accidental. The Western answers the domestic novel. It is the antithesis of the cult of domesticity that dominated American Victorian culture."

Jane Tompkins took a beating for her film analysis in last year's *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, yet her assessment of the genre's overarching significance in literary as well as cinematic form is right on target. If civilisation and language had become female spheres, Tompkins argued, then the Western represented an attempt by men to get back their own, by creating a separate sphere where language was fundamentally a mark of weakness and where technology, religion, cultures and the female sex were marginalised, or devalued, or absent entirely. If the Western, then, is the male half of a universe bifurcated by gender, then no wonder that the female Western is having so much trouble being reborn.

Tompkins goes so far as to assert that the "Western doesn't have anything to do with the West as such". She rejects all the arguments regarding Western metaphors, the tropes of civilisation and frontier, and argues that the Western is more truly "about men's fear of losing their mastery". The ritual nature of Westerns, then, might well be linked to male insecurities about that mastery and the need to have the certainty of their power reaffirmed through an eternal cycle of repetition – in other words, through the elaboration of a genre. (Don't forget, here, the equivalences that the critic Linda Williams traced between Westerns and pornographic films: the link to pornography could prove as important to thinking anew about the Western as the examination of the Western was for her re-thinking of porn.) ►

Boots and thumbs: Joan Crawford in the gender-bending 'Johnny Guitar' left; Uma Thurman in Gus Van Sant's 'Even Cowgirls Get the Blues', right

Do new Westerns such as 'Even Cowgirls Get the Blues' and 'The Ballad of Little Jo' suggest that women can muscle in on cowboys' territory? Or is the Western forever a man's world?
By B Ruby Rich



AT HOME ON THE RANGE

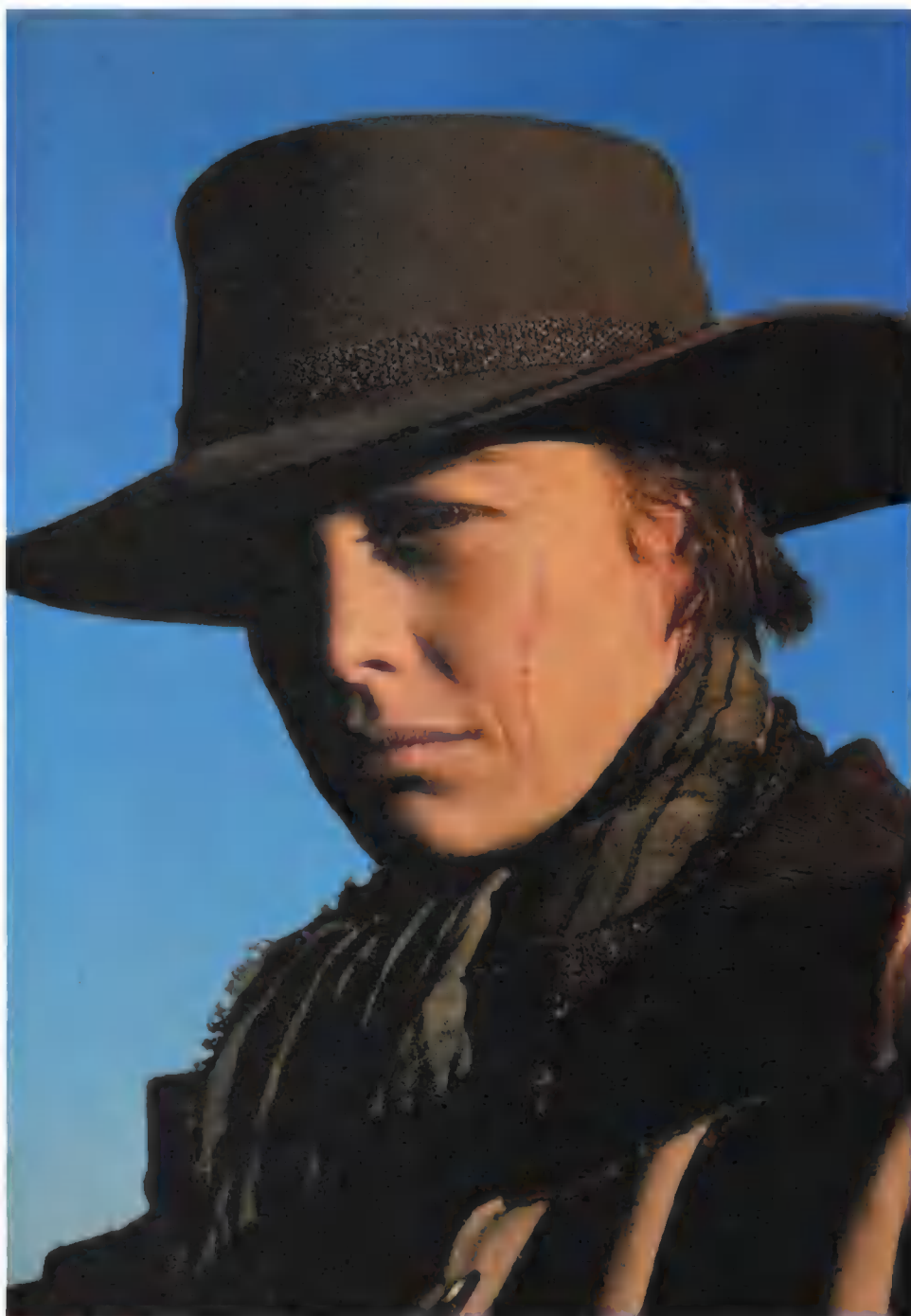


◀ Tompkins and Williams both have their focus upon the Westerns of the past; I have mine upon the present. Once the cracks in the hegemonic façade of Wild West mythology began to crack, it seemed only a matter of time before transgressive forms of the genre would start to show themselves. Once the Smithsonian could mount a show decolonising Western mythology and Mario Van Peebles could use star-power to put black posses on the screen, then the No Trespassing signs could start to come down along lots of the borders governing access to the genre. Was it, then, only a matter of time before the gender-bending fashion so prevalent in most other spheres of US culture in the post-*Crying Game* era would bring gender trespassing to the Western? Think again. It's just as possible that *Posse* could work precisely because the in-the-hood genre it transplanted to the frontier was just as committed to a violent all-male universe as the Western ever was.

Also, keep in mind that cowgirls mean different things to different people. This summer, when cowgirls were still enjoying their green-light momentum, *Harper's Bazaar's* Joseph Hooper wrote an article on the male fantasy of the cowgirl that's the very embodiment of wet-dream projection, straining to define the cowgirl mystique in boy-consumption terms and foolishly concluding that the cowgirl aura persists because she is profoundly "reassuring" to men. She proves that nature and sex are good – and on his side.

Take Hooper as representative of the normative, red-blooded American male's sense of cowgirls: tight jeans, rolls in the hay, spunky but ultimately less mannish than stand-by-your-mannish. You would never know, from reading Hooper or watching Greenwald's film or reading the original Tom Robbins novel from which Van Sant adapted his film, that the cowgirl myth is a centre-piece of lesbian culture too, nor that the history of cross-dressed "passing women" on the frontier has been found in lesbian archives rather than Western museums. You'd never know that the figure of the cowgirl has been a source of power to heterosexual women, too, embodying strength and freedom as forcefully as the male counterpart sparks fantasies of escape in the menfolk, at least in the US. Indeed in the Nineties such male claims to cowgirl fantasies sound an awful lot like compensatory and proprietary gestures towards an out-of-control object.

For all Hooper's certainty, the history of the Western periodically reveals renegade attempts to shift the ground. Given any genre's always-voracious need to reinvent itself in order to stay the same, even female characters occasionally rise to different positions in defiance of genre codes. Such shifts are particularly pronounced in the Westerns made in the 50s, when Marlene Dietrich starred in *Rancho Notorious* (1952), Barbara Stanwyck in *Forty Guns* (1957), and when Joan Crawford and Mercedes McCambridge tangled in the great lesbian-cult-Western, *Johnny Guitar* (1954). The genre rules get bent again in the 70s, with feminist critics of the Western pointing to films like *The Hired Hand* (1971), *Hannie Caulder* (1971) and *Comes a Horseman* (1978) as similar openings for women in search of the



A changeling's tale:
Suzy Amis as girl-come-boy Ju in Maggie Greenwald's 'The Ballad of Little Jo', above

kind of power Tompkins says the Western is specifically constructed to deny.

Tamra Davies, researching past Westerns for clues to her future one, went for *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968). But she, and we, would do well to heed the opinions of Jacqueline Levitin, who in her early 80s reappraisal of the Western contends that only Mae West is able to triumph over the obstacles of the form. *Klondike Annie* (1936) and *My Little Chickadee* (1940), both half a century old, are still in the vanguard. Levitin argued that they are the only American-made Westerns that "bear the stamp of a woman's point of view, and the only ones that deal with the West from the perspective of women's power." But what about today? Fifties. Seventies. If the urge strikes every other decade, then Female Westerns should be on the schedule again.

Enter Maggie Greenwald. Greenwald says she has wanted to make a Western ever since she was a child. Indeed, there's something childishly fairytale-like about *The Ballad of Little Jo*, not at all what you'd expect from the butched-up descriptions of the rugged cross-dressing Western the press kit describes. Suzy Amis plays an Eastern society woman who slips up and gets herself pregnant. In short order, she's exiled from her family and community (ie the East) to the horrors of poverty, vulnerability, attempted rape, and betrayal (ie the West). Traversing the frontier on her own, without protection, she realises that there's only one way a woman can survive the West: to disappear into manhood. So she cuts off her hair, cuts a scar in her face, changes her clothes, and presto, Josephine is Jo, without even the benefit of now-fashionable surgical assistance. Little Jo finds the town of Ruby City, where 'he' passes, becomes a miner and then sheepherder, and finally settled rancher; Jo fights the cattle interests and becomes just one of the guys all the way until death reveals her secret. Greenwald chooses a journey-of-the-innocent structure, and whenever the going gets rough, hey-donny-donny music surges on to the soundtrack and a montage of images tries to move the narrative along to its next high-point. I guess that's the "ballad" part of the title.

It's obvious early on that *Ballad* is not a film 'about' cross-dressing or sexual transgression, nor about Little Jo's psychology or inner life. Rather, what Greenwald offers is a view of the West from the perspective of a changeling, a creature whose alteration of herself alters as well as her (and our) experience of the frontier and the kinds of life it dictates to its inhabitants. Greenwald's view of Little Jo's transformation as lack rather than gain is certainly disappointing to viewers in search of lesbian prehistory or convincing butch behaviour (especially so because the film is based on an actual woman, Jo Monaghan, whose true gender was only discovered after her death). The film does better on what must have been more comfortable ground for its director: the everpresence of male violence – against other men and, in its sexual form, against women – and the absence of female options.

Greenwald wants to immerse us in the brutality of the "real" old West, but along the way

she stumbles on to something much more interesting and unexpected: the interplay of race and gender. David Chung plays Tinman, an ailing Chinese worker whom Jo rescues from lynching and takes on as a hired hand. A fellow outsider to the white male West, he immediately detects Jo's true gender and they become secret lovers. While Greenwald seems pretty unconscious of the stereotypes of feminised Asian masculinity that she finds it convenient to deploy here, the scenes of Amis and Chung making love are truly hot, with his long hair and her Nautilised body played for counterpoint. They're also *Ballad's* most transgressive scenes, suggesting as they do the exchange of roles and the interplay of dominance and submission that Greenwald is so loathe to explore in any same-sex pairings.

Actually, Greenwald comes close to doing just that – but the scenes involve Jo and a man, not a woman. Ian McKellen is cast in a minor role as Percy, a woman-hater whose intimate affection for the male Jo turns to rage when he discovers the truth. I don't know whether Greenwald's casting of McKellen here is ironic, iconic or subtextual red-herring, but it's an interesting spin. Jo, though, is ultimately more rancher than cowpoke. For the ever-elusive figure of the cowgirl, look elsewhere.

Cowgirls' revenge

"Ha!" said Jelly with dramatic disdain. "Movies. There hasn't been a cowgirl in Hollywood since the days of the musical Westerns. The last movie cowgirl disappeared when Roy and Gene got fat and 50. And there's never been a movie about cowgirls.... Cowgirls exist as an image. The idea of cowgirls prevails in our culture. Therefore, it seems to me, the fact of cowgirls should prevail.... I'm a cowgirl. I've always been a cowgirl. Caught a silver bullet when I was 12. Now I'm in a position where I can help others become cowgirls, too. If a girl wants to grow up to be cowgirl, she ought to be able to do it, or else this world ain't worth living in."

Enter Gus Van Sant. The infamous Bonanza Jellybean (henceforth Rain Phoenix) delivers this speech in the original Tom Robbins novel, and most of it has made it into the film as well. But perhaps I'm getting ahead of the story. For everyone who post-dates the Seventies, know that *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* concerns the adventures of one Sissy Hankshaw (that's Uma Thurman to you), born with giant thumbs and a consequent talent for hitchhiking. Sissy, star model for the Yoni Yum line of female-hygiene products, is dispatched by her employer, the arch-decadent Countess (John Hurt), to his Rubber Rose dude ranch cum health spa, where he has similarly dispatched a team of German admen to shoot a commercial of Sissy's cavorting in nature, in this case, in a *pas de deux* with a flock of whooping cranes.

Alas, the Rubber Rose manager Miss Adrian (Angie Dickinson) has her hands full, battling a crew of ornery cowgirls who aim to overthrow the patriarchy and restore the ranch, its clients and herds to the natural state of equilibrium of cowgirls and nature. Oh, and overlooking all the action from his mountain home is the Chink, a Japanese-American escapee from a

World War II internment camp misnamed by a renegade group of Native Americans called the Clock People who rescued him from a snowbank. Add to that a serious side-plot concerning the whooping cranes, peyote, the FBI and a certain Delores Del Ruby (Lorraine Bracco) and you can begin to imagine what Van Sant has taken on.

Or can you? The film has already managed to divide critics by both gender and generation, and only the goddess knows what a mass audience will make of it. My guess is that it's an instant, serious and lasting cult film. For sure, it's the craziest, most genderbending, transgressive Western that's ever made it to the screen. But remember that this is a film based on a novel that originally appeared in 1976 in serial form in a magazine called *High Times* – and it bears all the marks of its time of origin. For all the buzz, two decades long, regarding *Cowgirls* as a classic feminist text, on closer examination it's no such thing. Robbins would be quite comfortable with Hooper, both of them happy to provide sexual services to any cowgirl that might cross their path.

The Robbins novel surprises the faulty memory with its determined heterosexuality and male-centered narrative: the narrator is constantly inserting himself into the action and finally even awards himself a central role in the plot. This was great literary fun, but rather ►



Triumph of the dress: Mae West in 'Klondike Annie', where the West is seen through a woman's eyes, above

◀ undermines the conceptions of the novel as a dyke playground. Instead, it's true to its time, offering a reminder of what sexual liberation, heterosexual-style, was like. Robbins even has Bonanza Jellybean explain all the girl-girl sex to Sissy as just a man-shortage thing. The cowgirls on the Rubber Rose Ranch? "There's not a queer among 'em," declares Bonanza.

Gus Van Sant, bless his soul, has changed things a bit. In fact, he's taken almost every bit of heterosexuality out of the movie (except the Chink, but that's another story) and queered things up. Bonanza and Sissy fall so sweetly in love that it nearly gave me an acid-flashback to the earliest days of innocence of lesbian-feminism. The cowgirls' debates over group action and gender-appropriate strategies made me remember the worst nightmares of consciousness-raising groups and collective decision-making. My favourite line? "This furniture's too masculine!" The showdowns between Miss Adrian and Delores are hysterical reminders of how the women's movement divided women, with femininity pitted against revolution as either/or decisions. The whole plot of the whooping cranes is probably as good a fantasy as any regarding the origins of eco-feminism.

As this article goes to press, *Cowgirls* has not yet been released, not even in the US (where it's scheduled for the autumn), so it's too early to say how the general public will react to its hip mix of history, humour and whacky intelligence. The cameos alone should be a tip-off that this is no normative biopic: Roseanne Arnold as a palm-reading psychic who angers little Sissy's mother by predicting "lots and lots of women" in her child's future; River Phoenix as a guru-seeking hippy who tells Uma how "bummed out" he and his pals were by the Chink's shaking his wanger at them; William Burroughs as a random pedestrian worried about how gloomy the sky looks.

So far, *Cowgirls* has had two festival debuts. Word from Venice was mixed. At the Toronto Film Festival, the critical reception was chilly if not hostile. Keep in mind, though, that today's film press corps is a markedly male fraternity. Many of my beloved colleagues are just too square, too old, too young, or too heterosexual to enjoy the hallucinatory irony that this time-machine movie provides – though the notably hip editors of publications like *Vibe*, *OUT* and the *Village Voice* are on my side in believing that the movie has a great constituency in store, both today and in the years to come.

It may, though, be ahead of its time. Or maybe Gus stumbled on his way to the 70s revival and landed, not in a Robbins-replay commercial dream, but rather in a genuine lesbian-feminist movie. If so, while popular Richard Linklater picks up accolades for *Dazed and Confused*, his bland-revival party movie, Van Sant may suffer the critical scorn usually reserved for women directors. No matter: *Cowgirls* is irresistible fun. But is it a Western? Only a fraction of the film actually takes place at the Rubber Rose ranch: the rest of it transpires in the sites of Sissy's childhood, or in the New York apartments of the Countess or Sissy's erstwhile suitor Julian and his Beautiful People friends, or in one of the mysterious Clock-

works, or on the road, à la *My Own Private Idaho*.

Ah, but the Rubber Rose scenes that are there allow us to begin to imagine what a female Western might look like, if one could ever really be made. If, say, *Johnny Guitar* could borrow Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis from *Thelma & Louise* (the closest thing to a female Western so far) and imagine them shooting not at each other but at the good ole boys just outside the circle of firelight. You see, I suspect that the only way a female Western could ever be devised, one that could take advantage of the formulas and retain the magic of the genre, would be to replace race (cowboys versus Indians) with gender (cowgirls versus varmints).

Whatever solution anyone decides to try, if any other female Westerns make it into celluloid this decade, it would be wise to heed Jane Tompkins once again, who warns that "Westerns pay practically no attention to women's experience" in part because "when women wrote about the West, the stories they told did not look anything like what we know as the Western" since "women's experience as well as their dreams had another shape entirely". Offering no genre solution, she points instead to the work of feminist historians and literary critics who work on such material.

But what about the movies? It's clear that the Western genre is still strong, and that it remains pretty resistant to attempts by anyone



Cracking cowgirls: Lorraine Bracco, Uma Thurman and Rain Phoenix in 'Even Cowgirls Get the Blues'

not empowered by the original formulas to find a way in, be they women or Native Americans or Asian-Americans. In film, where metaphor is so much more literal and images more condensed than in literature or history, the basic dilemma facing anyone intent on fashioning a mainstream version of a female Western is obvious: how to find a way to give women as much power as men without making them lesbians, how to avoid pitfalls of butch and femme while retaining credible female characters, how to fashion any truce at all between sexuality and exploitation. I like to imagine Julie Christie, retrieved from the archaic world of *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, set into a newfangled Western where she could kick her opium habit and get on with the next chapter. Hey, no one said it would be easy.

Epilogue

Winter approaches. A new print of *Johnny Guitar* has just played to packed houses at New York's Public Theatre. k.d. lang is about to release her soundtrack CD to *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. Work has it that Di Novi and Duigan are starting work on a production of *Little Women* instead of *Outlaws*, a move from the frontier to the sitting-room that could make Tompkins look like a prophet. Jonathan Kaplan is directing *Bad Girls*, the Western that promised to be a transgressive Tamra Davis film, with a budget more than double the size she was given. Kelly Frost, an actual cowgirl and cowpoke-consultant-to-the-stars, is awaiting the release of *Lane Frost*, a biopic on her late husband.

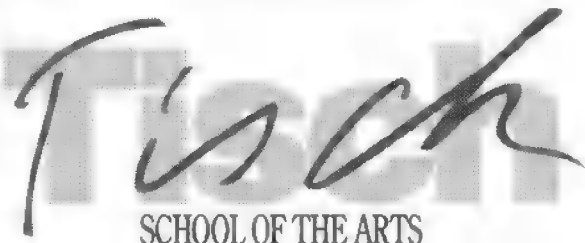
Maybe *Bad Girls* or *Lane Frost* or something else in the works will mess with the formulas, prove me wrong, get things right. I'm not holding my breath. I suspect that Jon Tuska was right when he said he very much doubted that "a Western film that is not a mandate to go forward proudly, a Western film that reveals the crimes and follies of the past rather than pretending only to find triumphs and righteousness regarded, a Western film in which everyone is consumed by some form of materialism" could ever be "commercially feasible".

So I'm waiting instead to see *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* again. I'm listening to a lot of country and western music. There's a Jimmie Dale Gilmore concert coming up. But life has a funny way of playing tricks. Here's what has shown up in top-40 country-radio rotation, autumn 1993, just as this article heads for your hands. Credit goes to singer/songwriter Toby Keith for his tune, "Should've Been A Cowboy".

"I'll bet you never heard old Marshall Dillon say, 'Miss Kitty, have you ever thought of running away, settling down? Would you marry me?/ If I asked you twice and begged you pretty please?/ She'd have said yes in a New York minute./ They never tied the knot, his heart wasn't in it./ He just stole a kiss as he rode away./ He never hung his hat up at Kitty's place/ I should've been a cowboy."

Domesticity and the frontier. Sex and marriage. Settlement and escape. Men and women. Civilisation and its discontents. Sound familiar? Feel free to hum along.

'The Ballad of Little Jo' is showing at the London Film Festival, Odeon West End 2 on 14 November



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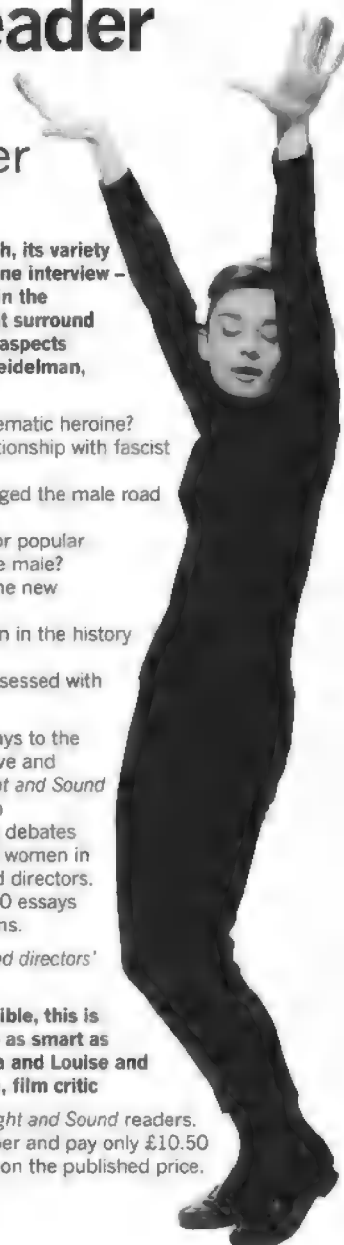
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NEW YORK AND OUAGADOUGOU: THE HOMES OF AFRICAN CINEMA

What is African cinema? Should Spike Lee be the rallying cry for Pan-Africanism? And should the continent's directors be making films for European audiences? By Manthia Diawara

● The cultural industry that surrounds African cinema is growing larger and larger, generating new festivals in every corner of the world. Yet from the point of view of a film industry, African cinema is no more significant than it was 10 or 15 years ago, with no production and distribution structures in place and a situation that resembles that of an auteur cinema with diversified, mainly European, funding sources. The Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) was convened during the thirteenth Pan-African Film Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) to reassess their leadership, the role of FESPACO and other festivals in promoting African cinema, the production and distribution of African films.

The lack of a public for African cinema in Africa is a complex issue. The colonisation of African screens by American and Kung Fu movies is certainly the main culprit, much as in Europe, Latin America and Asia American films take the larger share of the market, often relegating national products to art houses. The FEPACI congress recommended quotas and tax incentives to encourage the distribution of African films in Africa and divided the continent into six subregions (East, North, North-West, South-West, Central and Southern) with regional secretaries to oversee distribution. This compartmentalisation is utopian in many regards. The idea of a nation-state has failed in Africa, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to use it as the basis for organising an economic activity such as film distribution. Individual countries do not collaborate with decisions that are not favourable to the national interest (or the interest of the ruling party) and its bilateral relations with western countries such as France or the US.

African cinema exists in exile, with more African films seen in Europe and America than in Africa. An African film-maker told me that the recent African Film Festival in New York was more important to him than FESPACO because African films have a better market in

the US than in his own continent, though other film-makers criticise the proliferation of African film festivals outside Africa which do not always have the interests of African cinema as their main goal. Gaston Kaboré, the general secretary of FEPACI, was criticised for travelling too often to Europe and America and doing little networking closer to home.

FESPACO used to look favourably on Le Festival des Trois Continents à Nantes, Le Festival d'Amiens, the Milan Festival of African Cinema, and Vues d'Afrique in Montreal as sister festivals. But today some of these events are seen as threats to its own growth. Since the best African films are screened elsewhere – not to mention at Cannes, Venice, Berlin and London – film-makers no longer look to FESPACO for premieres. Such European and American festivals also contribute to the ghettoisation of African films, since they use them only for the purposes of promoting the degree of multiculturalism sanctioned by their own citizens.

African Cinema in Ouagadougou

FESPACO is the only film festival devoted to Pan-African cinema, a festival that takes seriously the task of nurturing, publicising and celebrating African films. Ouagadougou is the place to meet film-makers from other countries, to compare notes on films and to exchange information on funding sources. FESPACO is also like a homecoming or family reunion for film-makers, a chance to meet old friends in the same bars or restaurants and to reminisce about the good old days. Ask any African film-maker what FESPACO means to them, and they will tell you "FESPACO is our own, Ouagadougou is the home of African cinema, I don't feel marginalised here." Finally film-makers come to Ouagadougou to discuss strategies for the decolonisation of African screens and the creation of the ever-elusive African film industry.

Yet this year's festival was also the subject

of film-makers' complaints: the festival is no longer attentive to their concerns; it is no longer just a film festival but has become a *grande fête* featuring drummers from Burundi, fashion shows and business entrepreneurship. It is a festival for the sponsors that cares more about pleasing French tourists than the film-makers themselves (for about \$20 anyone can buy a badge stating that he or she is an invited guest). Hotels are overcrowded, and though FESPACO pays full price for rooms, corrupt managers turn official festival participants away in favour of tourists. And finally there is the complaint that the programming is too political, not to say chaotic, favouring some directors and excluding others.

Seeing movies with the president or his ministers always involves security checks, long delays before screenings and the reservation of many seats for their entourage. Some film-makers believe that the government influences the distribution of awards, and some threaten not to come back if things stay the same.

Close to a million people participate in the festival, which is one of the largest events of its kind in Africa, second only to the annual soccer championships. Organised with professionalism – computerised programming, efficient transport and catering facilities – it mobilises everybody in Ouagadougou as well as other cities and villages in Burkina Faso. The *grande fête* also attracts middle-class tourists from Mali, Senegal, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire out to escape the long fasting days of Ramadan. But now that FESPACO has become the most important cultural event in Africa, the Burkinabes suspect other African countries of trying to steal it from them.

It cost about \$1.5 million to organise the thirteenth FESPACO in February this year. The French government and the Francophone organisation Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (ACCT), footed the bill with some help from UNESCO, the EC and donations from other European countries. Burkina Faso, one of

the poorest countries in the world, supplies human resources as well as venues and infrastructure. Since other African countries do not pay their membership dues, some critics say that FESPACO is a European festival organised in Africa.

By far the largest of foreign delegations is the French, led by Minister of Francophony, Mme Tasca, and director of the Centre National de Cinéma (CNC), Dominique Wallon. Ninety per cent of African films are produced by the French government and Francophone organisations, so it is important for them to make a strong showing, and to defend their films. FESPACO is also a *coup* in terms of French foreign policy. The festival's international media coverage on such radio stations as the BBC, RFI (Radio France International) and Africa No. 1 rivals that of the Somalia crisis, so what better place than FESPACO for France to demonstrate its friendship towards Francophone Africa. It is said that for Mitterrand, Francophone Africa was crucial to France's bid to remain a world power in the twenty-first century. Rumour also had it that the right was coming to power in France, and that leftist civil servant functionaries were mounting schemes for new African film production companies to fall back on after the elections. Thus this year's FESPACO witnessed the inauguration of yet another new production company, Ecrans du Sud, to be based in Paris and funded by French philanthropic societies.

FESPACO's credibility is threatened by two factors. It is no secret that North African films only ever receive secondary prizes, with the major awards such as the Etalon de Yennenga and Oumarou Ganda Award reserved for important French co-produced Sub-Saharan films. Tunisian cinema is experiencing a golden age, with films by talented directors such as Nouri Bouzid and Ferid Boughedir who have been silenced in the last two festivals, along with film-makers from Morocco and Egypt. Is it possible that Tunisian cinema's innovative explorations of homosexuality and eroticism have dissuaded FESPACO from celebrating it? The festival has also turned down Diaspora films such as Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied*, and Isaac Julien's *Looking For Langston* in the belief that they are inappropriate because of their homosexual content. The other serious threat to credibility is the decision of Africa's most famous directors not to put their films in the competition as an encouragement to younger and less popular film-makers. So neither Sembène Ousmane's *Gelwaar* nor Djibril Diop Mambetti's *Hyena* competed this year.

For most people at the festival, every day brings hard choices between attending screenings, shopping in the rue Marchande, receptions and cocktail parties at foreign embassies, and fashion shows. The rue Marchande consists of several blocks closed off to traffic for the week of the festival. There are millet beer and fruit vendors, art merchants, local textiles, condom stands, T-shirts, fashion from neighbouring countries and from France, musical instruments, advertising agencies and booths for radio stations and political parties. The rue Marchande is an important part of the eco-



Haunting memories: Haile Gerima's 'Sankofa', a film that dramatises the African-American engagement with Africa

nomie contribution of FESPACO to the city of Ouagadougou. Conservative estimates put the revenue for the 500 vendors at about \$5,000 each – a considerable sum given the fact that Burkina Faso has one of the lowest GNPs in the world. It is estimated that the festival will gross about \$3.5 million this year, and the rue Marchande comes after the hotels and airlines as a generator of revenue: it is a metaphor for the fate of African cinema. For one week, the street bustles with buyers and merchandise; come the week's end, buyers and the market disappear. Similarly, during the week of FESPACO, African audiences gather in front of cinemas, the international press discusses the movies and African cinema becomes a vital part of everyday culture. But at the end of the festival Westerns and Kung Fu films resume their monopoly and African movies wait another two years to be celebrated.

The lack of a market is the single most important obstacle to the development of African cinema. It is impossible to have a Senegalese or Burkina film industry, just as it is impossible for individual countries to sustain a sugar or shoe industry, because the cost of producing a chain of films exceeds each individual country's potential ticket revenue. The African films have to compete with foreign films, just as the sugar produced nationally has to compete with imported brands.

Only an extended market beyond national boundaries can provide a sufficient audience for African films. The Pan-African Federation of Film-makers gathers at every FESPACO to put pressure on governments to open up markets, and to lower taxes on the exhibition of African movies. Is it possible that African cinema, like many other modern industries, will fall victim to a nationalism which, ironically, celebrates the films of Sembène, Souleymane Cissé and Idrissa Ouedraogo as national treasures? While the nation-state in Africa is busy mimicking Europe in the celebration of the western democratic model, African cinema realises that with-

out a market, art and democracy are not possible. Markets are Africa's road to democracy and the good-life society, and only Pan-Africanism can gather such markets.

FESPACO 1993 was also a *grande fête* for African Americans, known in Ouagadougou as *les Américains Noirs*. Not since the Festival Africains des Arts Nègres at Dakar in 1966, or FESTAC in Lagos just over a decade later, has there been such a mass convergence of Africans and blacks from the Diaspora on the African continent. Just as it was possible to see in Dakar and Lagos Duke Ellington, Alvin Ailey, Wole Soyinka and many more black intellectual leaders, FESPACO 1993 too, had its black who's who: Alice Walker, Clyde Taylor, John Singleton, Tracy Chapman, Ahmadou Kourouma, Ibrahima Baba Kake, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, and, of course, Sembène Ousmane, as well as cultural workers and policy-makers Andrea Taylor (Ford Foundation), Michelle Materre (formerly of Women Make Movies), Cornelius Moore (California Newsreel), Ayuko Babu (Los Angeles African Film Festival) and Mahen Bonetti (Africa Film Festival/Lincoln Center). Spike Lee and Danny Glover were expected, but only *Malcolm X* arrived, dubbed in French. Singleton said he had asked his distributors to send *Boyz n the Hood*, but that the copy was lost on the way.

The Diaspora's adoption of FESPACO started in 1983, spearheaded by Haile Gerima and such independent film-makers and Pan-Africanists as Larry Clark, Menelik Shabazz, Abiyi Ford, Mbye Cham and Clyde Taylor, who wanted to include films from the Diaspora in the official competition. Thomas Sankara, then president of Burkina Faso, was also a Pan-Africanist who was supportive of the idea of bringing black Americans to Ouagadougou to subvert the Francophone hegemony. At FESPACO 1993 the Diaspora award, also known as the Paul Robeson Prize, went to *Lumumba: The Death of a Prophet* (*Lumumba: La Mort du prophète*) by Raoul Peck (Haiti). Haile Gerima, whose new film *Sankofa* was shown in this year, and Larry ►

◀ Clark have not attended FESPACO since the death of Sankara, who was killed by the present regime. Spike Lee and John Singleton are the symbols of Pan-Africanism at FESPACO today. The audiences loved *Malcolm X*, identifying with the protagonist's every move, especially Malcolm's visit to Mecca, his speeches, and Mandela's claim that he is Malcolm X. Spectators at Ouagadougou enjoy interacting with actors on screen; they call bad guys names, applaud good guys, and warn them of imminent dangers. Most of the complaints came from Europeans and some Americans, for whom Lee has sold out to Hollywood through recourse to a less radical film language and a commodification of Malcolm X's life.

African cinema at the Lincoln Center

The African Film Festival (AFL), which ran at the Lincoln Center through the month of April and at The Brooklyn Museum from 17 April to 23 May, catapulted New York audiences to a new appreciation of African cinema. The Lincoln Center has long signified a sure passage to commercial theatres for international cinema, a testing ground that enables cinephiles and distributors to see which foreign films go down well with American audiences. For African cinema, the Lincoln Center festivals provided the first opportunity to address Americans directly.

Among the movies screened was *A Certain Morning*, a film by Fanta Regina Nacro, the first female film-maker from Burkina Faso. One of Nacro's characters puts to African cinema the same reflexive question that André Bazin put to French cinema in the 50s: "Father, what is cinema?"

The story is a simple one. A man stumbles on a small chip of wood on his way to work and cannot put the incident out of his mind since it is a sign of bad luck in his culture. Once at his work-place in the forest, he hears a woman screaming: "Help me! Help me, he's killing me." The man stands up and grabs his rifle; the camera cuts to a woman walking peacefully onwards. The man puts down his rifle, swearing he must have imagined it, when he hears the woman screaming again. This time he sees a man running after her with a sabre and shoots him. The following scene reveals a perturbed film crew with the director shouting "Cut! Cut!" Our man has interfered with a film in progress; he has blurred his reality, layered with superstition, with a *mise en scène* for a film.

They take the actor to the clinic; luckily, he is only wounded (to have killed him would have broken the spectator's heart, since he/she identifies with the superstitious man as an innocent who only wanted to save a woman from harm). Meanwhile, the camera cuts to the man and his son, who asks, "Father, what is cinema?" We hear Nacro's answer on the soundtrack in a song in the Dioula language: "Cinema is make believe, cinema is sad, cinema is play, cinema is reality, cinema is love."

A Certain Morning won the Gold Medal for short films at the Carthage International Film Festival in Tunisia, but was overlooked at Ouagadougou. Perhaps Fanta Nacro's reflexive cinema, which calls attention to its own style of

storytelling, eluded a jury composed mostly of cultural policy-makers with little appreciation of art. But in spite of its playfulness and simple narrative, *A Certain Morning* makes an important intervention in African cinema.

The lasting resonance of the films of Sembène and the emergence of world-class directors such as Cissé and Ouedraogo challenge any idea of a monolithic African cinema. And Fanta Nacro's question addresses the largely male hegemony. One reason for the dearth of female film-makers in Africa is women's exclusion from the apprenticeship tradition. Several male film-makers trained as assistants to gaffers, camera and sound persons and even directors before going on to film school. Women, on the other hand, tend to study first. Safi Faye, Senegal's first female director, earned a PhD in anthropology before becoming a film-maker and often brags about being over-qualified, or more educated than her male counterparts. Mariama Hima, the first female film-maker from Niger, earned a superior degree in anthropology before directing her first film.

The Idrissa Ouedraogo school of African cinema is characterised by beautiful images, perfect frames and flawless editing. For this school, Sembène's political cinema is now passé; their argument is that we can no longer afford to make films in opposition to Europe because Europe is in us and we are in Europe. This is Africa's post-modern cinema. The Ouedraogo school wants to make films that will appeal to European audiences because there are no markets for African films in Africa. Film-makers such as Moussa Touré (*Touba Bi*), Pierre Yameogo (*Laafi*) and Leonce Ngabo (*Gito the Ungrateful/Gito l'ingrat*) emphasise what they see as universal in Africa; they stress the need to go beyond didactic cinema and to posit diversity of desires and the desire for diversity. There is a Negritude aspect to both *Touba Bi* and *Gito* which posits the city and modernisation as dehumanising, and nature, particularly African nature, as authentic and good for the soul.

Sembène responds by saying, "Ne me parlez pas de Negritude, ce sont les nègres qui ont tué Lumumba et Malcolm X" ("Don't talk to me about Negritude: it was negroes who killed Lumumba and Malcolm X"). Sembène's supporters see the Ouedraogo school as a "cinéma de calebasse" (Calabash cinema), or cinema à la *National Geographic*, whose beautiful images serve only to fix Africans as exotic primitives. Some regard Sembène's radicalism as the stance that saves African cinema from being co-opted by the hegemonising European film language and as a courageous cinema against colonialism; such supporters dismiss the Ouedraogo school as village cinema.

Between Ouedraogo and Sembène are veterans such as Souleymane Cissé (*Yeelen*), Djibril Diop Mambetti (*Badou Boy*), Méd Hondo (*Sarraouina*), Safi Faye (*Letter From My Village*) and

Sembène's supporters see the Ouedraogo school as cinema à la 'National Geographic'... Africans as exotic primitives

Gaston Kaboré (*Rabi*), as well as the new talent of directors such as Godwin Mawuru (*Neria*), Adama Drabo (*Ta Dona*), Clarence Delgado (*Niiwam*) Jean-Marie Teno (*Africa, I will Pluck You Clean/Afrique, Je te plumerai*) Flora Gomes (*The Blue Eyes of Yonta*) and Jean-Pierre Bekelo (*Quartier Mozart*). Unlike many of Sembène's films, which are allegories of colonialism and modernisation, or many of the film-makers of the Ouedraogo school, who avoid crowded spaces in favour of romantic tranquillity, film-makers in this group tackle social problems such as sex education, poverty and corruption in Africa through references to elements of popular culture such as song and dance, oratory, traditional theatre and popular stars. Their films are about the African public sphere, and the entertainment comes with covert messages about how to be smart in the city, honesty as a virtue, and the failure of African systems to improve the lives of their citizens.

Clarence Delgado's *Niiwam* is a gem in this category. Most of the film takes place in a crowded bus moving from one end of Dakar to another. Delgado succeeds in telling a very sad if typical story in a lively and humorous manner, defining each character convincingly before he or she steps out of the picture. *Niiwam* provides one answer to Fanta Nacro's question about the nature of cinema in Africa: fiction and reality are blurred as Delgado's bus stops to take in and discharge passengers. It is easy to appreciate the difficulty of making a film like this with non-professional actors, and of convincing the crowd not to interfere with the fiction as did the man in *A Certain Morning*. African directors work mostly with non-professionals who bring the flavour of everyday life to the films and serve as a bridge between fiction and reality. The question "What is cinema?" in African terms may be a way of asking African film-makers to consider African populations as their primary audiences and to anchor their work in the aesthetics of the everyday, producing stories of pleasure as well as tragedy.

The choice of the Lincoln Center as a venue for this gathering of African cinema is a tribute to its new international stature. As festival organiser Mahen Bonetti put it: "We felt that African cinema compares with the best of world cinema today, winning top awards at the festivals of Cannes, Berlin and Venice; and we chose the Lincoln Center, a Mecca for the arts, to introduce Americans to the best African films." The public agreed, with the films on show breaking attendance records, and their mixed audiences bringing multiculturalism to the Lincoln Center.

But film-makers are wary: they do not want their films or themselves to be used for causes they do not understand or support, as they are in France, Italy and Canada, where people create well-paid jobs for themselves in the name of African film festivals. They see their films disappear, or promises withdrawn once the screenings are over. On the whole, festivals have contributed more to ghettoising their films than to opening markets.

The African Cinema programme at the London Film Festival runs from 9-18 November at NFT 1/2 and MOMI. 'Sankofa' is at NFT 1 on 6 November

The



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**Sight
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● It has been fashionable lately to ring the death knell for B movies. Be it at the hands of escalating film costs, the blockbuster mentality or the skid row dumping ground of home video, the authentic B has become a cinematic dodo, as obsolete as the newsreel, the biblical epic or – let's face it – the musical. The Bs of yore – smaller budgeted cousins to As that the studios churned out to fill up bijou double bills – are famous for being unpoliced petri dishes of movie making brio. Studios paid as little regard to the making of such films as to the making of cartoons (after years of Bugs and Daffy, Jack Warner was reportedly shocked to find his studio wasn't responsible for Mickey Mouse), and thus film-makers were allowed elbow room for idiosyncrasy, genre-bending, expressionistic visuals and often harrowing nihilism. Formula could be fuzzed: in the cheaper noirs, for instance, happy endings and Mr Clean heroics could be avoided altogether. The hard-luck Underman of Edgar G. Ulmer's original *Detour* is lost on a highway to hell you'll never find on any studio A-list map.

We've come a long way, baby. Nowadays mainstream movies rarely have the nerve to defy their designated demographics. All things being equal, the untamed nation of straight-to-video films, with their endless self-cloning sequels, is closer in spirit to serials and exploitation indies. Once someone like Steven Seagal has entered the A lists, you know there's no room left in the movie-culture food chain for Bs any more.

Perhaps this is why the sullen, impulsive films of James B. Harris are consistently overlooked and underseen. Genuine B noirs in the purest, non-reflexive sense of the word, Harris' films are inglorious, pipe-dream-haunted gutterdicks, with the cheap integrity of drugstore-rack fiction. In a fitful career that has run from Stanley Kubrick's producer on *The Killing* (1956), *Paths of Glory* (1957) and *Lolita* (1961) to director of the new *Boiling Point* (1993), Harris has kept faith with the basic principles of genre without succumbing to neo-anything, 'homage' or pretension. The interface with pulpmaster Jim Thompson (co-writer on *The Killing* and *Paths of*

Glory) is not incidental; Harris' later films come closer to Thompson's blood-and-puddle sensibility than anyone has, without ever straining to be retro. For Harris, the original dead end alleyway of noir never faded into the Method decathlon of the 70s or the smirky cash cow farm of the 80s. It has always been there; you just need to look under the right rock.

Sporadic producing credits aside (including Don Siegel's forgettable 1977 Charles Bronson thriller *Telefon*), Harris' oeuvre is limited to five films, the first of which, *The Bedford Incident* (1965), is a taut if mundane atomic sub-thriller (co-produced by star Richard Widmark) that showed the strain of trying to catch up with Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*. Eight years later, Harris emitted *Some Call It Loving* (1973), a woozy, rarely seen post-hippie version of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale (adapted from a John Collier story) starring soft-porn-auteur-to-be Zalman King, a thoroughly druggy Richard Pryor and the immobile Tisa Farrow. But it wasn't until *Fast-Walking* (1982) – nine years later – that Harris began to stake his own post-noir territory.

Like Harris' subsequent films, *Fast-Walking* is a character study masquerading as a genre film, a risky strategy that has usually garnered little more than critical antipathy and befuddlement. As with *Cop* (1988) and *Boiling Point*, *Fast-Walking* was positioned as a genre thriller – a prison film – but what viewers got instead was a quirky melange of debauched characters backstabbing each other in and around one of cinema's strangest, and most sparsely populated, correctional facilities. James Woods, apparently Harris' low life character actor of choice, plays "Fast-Walking" Miniver, a pot-smoking, happily corrupt prison guard given to daydreamy moneymaking schemes and playing the SoCal prison's various socio-economic forces against one another. He pimps for the local migrant workers, would certainly run drugs if he thought he wouldn't get set up, and generally occupies a rung on the moral ladder only a notch higher – and often several notches lower – than the inmates he guards. As played by Woods, Miniver is less hardened riff-raff than a congenial, weaselly, grift-happy class

clown to whom everyone is potentially both comrade and mark. The perambulations of the rather dubious story (involving the attempted assassination of a newly arrived black activist inmate) are further fuelled by Miniver's cousin Wasco (Tim McIntire), an inmate with administrative duties who slowly reveals himself to be a megalomaniac prison despot who has delusions of grandeur and is intent on taking over the big house's drug trade from Kubrick alumnus Timothy Carey.

As befits Harris' oddball up-ending of genre conventions, McIntire's power-mad genius all but steals the movie – the first bitter taste of Harris' aesthetic, which emphasises the fall-out from outlaw culture over the culture itself. Re-entering the noir sensibility freshly, and without any reference to its clichés as a cinematic style, Harris' chief concern is how the genre forms, affects and poisons its people. The characters in *Fast-Walking* wander through the movie with their own twisted agendas, and the movie can barely keep track. Wasco is a freakish, unpredictable creation designed to warp the formula, not fulfil it.

Not surprisingly, like all of Harris' movies, *Fast-Walking* was a flop, a square peg that never fitted into audiences' round-hole idea of pop movie-making. Unashamedly cheap, and reeking of legitimate B attitude, *Fast-Walking* was based on *The Rap* by Ernest Brawley, a crime novel of the kind Harris continues to plumb for chaotic, desperate, pretensionless material.

His next film, *Cop*, may be his best and nastiest, and although the novelist James Ellroy, upon whose early *Blood on the Moon* it was based, has said he doesn't like the film, he should. Its grimy, pugnacious, hypercynical vision of the urban universe is truer to the tenets of bleak pulp fiction such as Ellroy's than any number of more fashionable 80s neo-noirs.

Woods stars as Lloyd Hopkins, a rabid LA detective obsessed with the savage murder of a young woman. What puts Hopkins in a wholly separate phylum from the usual burnt-out movie cops is his raw jungle hate – faced every day with the squalor and filth of human potential, Hopkins sees himself as an angel of

Producer for Stanley Kubrick, James B Harris is also a fine director of wild, dark and sullen movies. By Mike Atkinson

GENUINE B NOIR

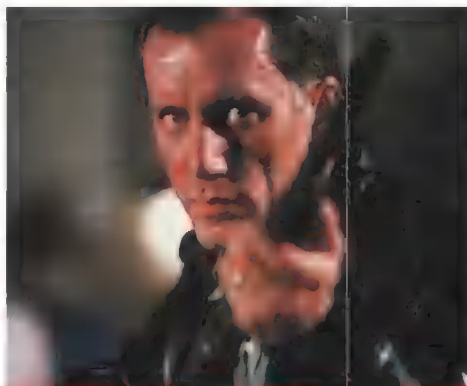
justice on a sick earth, with as little regard for the law as the criminals he hunts. A single shot early on captures Hopkins' worldview: roaches writhing helplessly in a thickened puddle of blood. The ultimate moral pragmatist, he routinely tells his young daughter violent case histories at bedtime. "Innocence kills," he spits back when his wife objects. "I see it every fucking day."

Indeed, *Cop* concerns itself with oft-ignored police-story questions – how do you come home and tell your daughter fairy tales after seeing, as Hopkins has, a teenage girl eviscerated and hung from her toes? Other similar genre pieces would take sides – is Hopkins correct in his compulsive search for a serial killer, or is he, as his fed-up wife says, "deeply disturbed"? – whereas *Cop* concludes that not only are both true, but both must be true, one logically resulting from the other. Harris' film is an endless corridor of de-evolved motivations and mad-dog cruelty, with its few untainted characters (including Lesley Ann Warren's fidgety rape victim-turned-radical feminist) merely representing the betrayed martyrs of innocence.

With his own gore-worn code of righteousness (contrasted with his superiors, who are all born-again Christians), Hopkins is the ultimate Harris hero, a crash-and-burn idealist so well acquainted with the soft white underbelly that it has eroded his reason down to its black-or-white, live-or-die extremities. In the film's climactic moment, as Hopkins corners the nutcase killer (Steven Lambert), justice is both served and perverted. "You're a cop," the psycho says, "you gotta take me in." "Well, there's some good news and some bad news," Hopkins replies, at the tail end of a series of bloody murders, departmental scandal and the trainwreck of his home life. "The good news is you're right, I'm a cop and I gotta take you in. The bad news I've been suspended, and I don't give a fuck." He shotguns the killer's head off. Cut to black.

Just as the original noirs did, *Cop* dares us to accept an honest fatalism, and yet we seem less capable of digesting such a bitter pill than the post-Second World War audiences of *Detour*, *The Big Heat* or *Born To Kill*. Harris' new film,

Dark and lonely: James Woods in 'Cop', top; Richard Widmark, Sidney Poitier and Eric Portman in 'The Bedford Incident', middle; Wesley Snipes in 'Boiling Point', Harris' new policier, right



the ersatz Wesley Snipes policier *Boiling Point*, is nearly an object lesson in how to betray audience expectations. Promoted as a rippling action movie in the spirit of *Passenger 57*, *Boiling Point* is actually a modern B-type study in loneliness and failed relationships.

Based on another neglected gutter fiction (Gerald Petievich's *Money Men*), the film volleys between the doomed efforts of three characters – Snipes' embittered, divorced federal agent, Dennis Hopper's menopausal ex-con with a headful of horse feathers, Viggo Mortensen's gullible cop-slayer – to reassemble their decimated lives. Intent on proving themselves worthy of the film's women (including Valerie Perrine as Hopper's ex-wife and Lolita Davidovich as the only heart-o'-gold hooker in town), all three speed towards a brick wall of self-delusion, natural-born violence and their own crushing limita-

tions. Snipes can barely concentrate on his job for fear of losing his son and wife forever – when he forces himself into their home in the middle of the night, he is confronted with his wife's lover, who is bigger, steadier and more responsible than he is. Like *Cop*'s hydrophobic hero, Snipes has driven his family away by his bullet-headed pursuit of vice, not his love of the law. Once he realises he's been replaced as his son's father, he simply decides to turn in his badge – with his private life a smoking ruin, he couldn't give two shits about justice.

Hopper, like Fast-Walking and Wasco, suffers from a gambler's addiction to easy money, and of course his attempts at a last heist go terribly awry. As the clean-cut, disaffected triggerman, Mortensen is pure sociopath, matter-of-factly shotgunning grifter after grifter at Hopper's behest. Taking place almost entirely at night, *Boiling Point* is a closed circle – Harris clearly demarcates a thematic rat-pit for his born losers to live and die in. The peripheral characters, especially Snipes' wife, appear to be leading perfectly normal lives. *Boiling Point*'s central terrain is the hopeless shadowland of small-time law and crooks, each sucked deeper and deeper down their own blind alleys.

Inevitably, *Boiling Point* was trashed by American critics, discontented with its lack of thrills and its aura of sour melancholy. That Harris is permitted (albeit infrequently) by the system to make his resolutely unprofitable films at all is a Hollywood miracle. Aged 65 and the last of the red-hot B masters, Harris is something of an anachronism in the current filmscape, occupying the narrow no-man's-land between budget-bloated movie 'events' and video quickies – two modes of the same movie-making-for-profit-alone sensibility. Unfettered by the principles of commerce, or even of art, Harris' movies are small, wild, sad and nasty in ways we've forgotten films can be. Like true Bs have always been, they're more interesting for their wayward narratives and ragged grit – a movie world where anything dark and cruel can happen.

'Boiling Point' was released on 24 September and is reviewed in this issue on page 37. *'Cop'* is available on video from 4 Front at £5.99



BY GAVIN LAMBERT

Like Tony Richardson, Gavin Lambert, novelist and screenwriter, moved from Britain to Hollywood. Here he remembers the rich and complex life and achievements of his longtime friend

TONY RICHARDSON

AN ADVENTURER

● Early in our long friendship, Tony Richardson said to me: "You're very attuned to other people's feelings. You know when to probe and when to leave things alone, and why." I already knew Tony well enough not to take this as a compliment. He was a brilliant game-player and had just laid down a ground rule. We were cat and mouse, and the roles could be interchangeable. Expecting me to guess the questions I was never to ask, he also expected me to infer the answers. Even when he was mortally ill, I observed Tony's ground rule. In the last months of his life, we seemed to be playing a very subtly directed scene in a movie, its dialogue loaded with subtext. Nothing momentous was said, yet everything important was somehow expressed. The director, of course, was Tony. It was his last movie.

In his memoir, *Long Distance Runner*, Tony remarks more than once that he has "never been introspective". Typically, he leaves it at that, but one obvious reason is that he never had enough time. The true adventurer never does. Anyone who sets out to challenge the established order of things commits himself to a long, exacting fight, and introspection gets in the way. Self-doubt, any kind of self-examination is a booby trap. Falling into it, he wastes a lot of energy getting out, and not even Tony, whose energy was phenomenal, could spare enough to take on himself as well as the world.

The first world that Tony took on, in the late 50s, was British theatre and cinema, and he conquered it by the time he was 30. The opening chapter of his memoir, with its pungent account of a middle-class Yorkshire childhood, makes it clear that he was a born outsider, impatient with the dead weight of convention and respectability. "All I was waiting for was to get out as soon as I could and into the world I'd chosen - and there was never any other choice - directing." At the age of eight he was taken to see a touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and knew instantly that "I wanted to be part of that totally riveting world... How I was going to get there I didn't know, but I knew I would."

Fifteen years later, setting out on the journey, Tony had three very strong cards to play - will power, the desire to control and, of course, talent. But an essential part of any talent is a talent for luck, and he had that too. Beginning

with George Devine and John Osborne, he found ideal allies in the theatre. His early professional years, as co-founder of the English Stage Company, then as leader of the 'new wave' in British films from *Look Back in Anger* in 1959 to the international success of *Tom Jones* in 1963, are admirably summed up by Lindsay Anderson in his introduction to Tony's memoir. Lindsay also disposes of the dreary canard that the Long Distance Runner grew short of breath after he crossed the Atlantic. Just as importantly, he points out that although Tony became the figure-head of a new movement, he disclaimed all responsibility for it. He launched Lindsay's own career as a theatre director, he produced Karel Reisz's first film, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, but shrugged off any acknowledgment of the fact, believing that "each man's destiny is his own affair".

Part of Tony's destiny was to be misunderstood, and this was another thing he shrugged off. The true adventurer is always indifferent to misunderstanding, and soon learns to expect it. He's far more involved in making his own history than in what history is making of him. Knowing that it has never been safe to be unpopular, he doesn't confuse safety with personal security. Put-downs come with the territory. They can prick, but never puncture.

One of the more peculiar ethical hang-ups of the English is that an Englishman may expatriate himself to France or Italy without selling his soul to the devil, but if he transplants himself to California he's hell-bent for corruption. Although nobody reproached Graham Greene for settling in Antibes, Isherwood, Huxley, Hitchcock, Hockney and the rest took a great deal of flak when they moved to Los Angeles. Some kind of national inferiority complex is at work here, of course, masquerading as self-righteousness. The idea that nobody goes to America except for the money is far more materialistic than the materialism it affects to condemn, and these grapes of wrath have turned very sour.

In any case, Tony had been under attack from the London critics long before he finally settled in Los Angeles. Most of them were hostile to the Royal Court production of *Look Back in Anger*, which met with a much warmer reception on Broadway. The major accolades for *Tom Jones* came not from England (*The Times*: "There

is nothing in this film that could give any member of the audience one moment of enjoyment"), but from Hollywood, where it won Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director. Not surprisingly, Tony came to see the US as an open society, in contrast to his closed and stratified homeland, but his first Hollywood experience was disillusioning. I was working at Fox during the time that Tony made *Sanctuary*, and witnessed his losing battle with the regimentation and bureaucracy of a major studio. The experience left him vowing never to make another movie shackled to a sound stage, executive censorship, contract screenwriters and players, and he never did. To the end of his life he dismissed all Hollywood movies of the 30s and 40s as hopelessly compromised. But there was more than a touch of relish in this, and he was really continuing to settle an old score.

From the mid 60s until 1973, when he bought a house in Los Angeles, Tony commuted between England, France, New York and Los Angeles. The theatre had now definitely slipped to second place in his life, and several of his movies were international co-productions. A nomadic period, it had a few high points but more low ones. *The Loved One*, his second American film, was independently financed, but not without its power struggles, as the cameraman was also the co-producer and favoured the kind of elaborately smooth, major-studio lighting Tony detested.

This battle he won, but another remains unresolved. The movie overlays Evelyn Waugh's cool, urbane satire with some uniquely wild 60s black comedy, and the shifts of tone are sometimes disconcerting. All the same, it lives up enthusiastically to its publicity slogan - Something To Offend Everyone - and its take on the American funeral business, a hitherto taboo subject in Hollywood, is often lethal. Among the most deeply offended was Waugh himself, but the scenes with Mr Joyboy and his enormous bulimic mother, and Liberace as a casket salesman, written (by Terry Southern) and directed with an insolent, fearless gusto, have more edge than anything in the novel.

American-financed and shot on location in Turkey, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* was the most ambitious work of this period and arguably the best British film of Tony's career. An anti-epic with all the spectacular trap- ▶

TONY RICHARDSON: GAVIN LAMBERT



◀ pings of an epic, it used a famous heroic event of the past as the pretext for an ironic and timely exposé of the military code. Structurally the film is at times shaky (the first cut was almost five hours long), but the narrative sweep and vividly authentic period atmosphere carry it through. Tony writes in his memoir that when he used colour for the first time in *Tom Jones*, he was "determined to make the English countryside look as if it was unchanged from the eighteenth century and the people as real as today". In *The Charge* he brought off a similar coup, an instant-Victorian naturalness where nothing seems visually imposed, and everything makes its effect through a refusal of effects.

Tony's other films during these years were distinctly below his earlier level, which he didn't regain until he settled in California. *Mademoiselle*, uncharacteristically glum and stylised, is at least no ordinary failure, and has a kind of weird courage: *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, *Laughter in the Dark* and *Ned Kelly* are just weirdly muddled. The high and low points had a parallel in Tony's personal life with his marriage to Vanessa Redgrave, and their divorce after his affair with Jeanne Moreau. In *Long Distance Runner* he writes that the after-effects of two failed relationships left him not knowing "who I wanted to be or where I wanted to be". He leaves it at that, apart from a few cryptic sentences about the long-term happiness he later found with Grizelda Grimond. "My own lifestyle was well-defined", he tells us (without defining it), but in spite of difficulties (unspecified), they managed to cement "more than a friendship, less than a marriage".

Leaving it for the moment where Tony leaves it, and moving on to Los Angeles, the first thing to be said is that he did some remarkable, undervalued work there. Although he loved his adopted city – "I know it's more exciting than Athens or Rome ever were!" – he remained an outsider in the movie industry. Resolutely opposed to the studio tradition, he encountered a mixture of respect and distrust. The main problem was that Tony never had a major box-office success after *Tom Jones*, and it left him short of bargaining chips. Faithfully conforming to his taste for nonconformist subjects and shooting on location, uninterested in most Hollywood stars, he was unable to realise several promising projects, including a Sam Sheppard script and *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. But as Vanessa wrote about Tony, "He has an absolute scorn of playing safe, and can be very provocative." Tony managed to provoke the powers that be into letting him make *The Border*, *The Hotel New Hampshire* and *Blue Sky*.

The first of these was the easiest to set up, as it had insurance in the name of Jack Nicholson, a star who happened to be right for the leading role and wanted to play it. This central character is a patrol man on the Mexican border who traffics in illegal immigrants, and around him Tony planned to create a "documentary fresco" of the exploiter and the exploited. "I had lots of notes and ideas and stories," he writes, but the problem was "to find a 'hook' on it". Although he worked with three writers on a succession of scripts, the "hook" finally eluded everybody,

A sense of place was always one of Tony's strongest talents, from the grimy Salford of 'A Taste of Honey' to the almost lunar shoreline of 'Blue Sky'

and the addition of some rather conventional melodrama diluted the original idea. But the film comes sharply alive in all the "fresco" scenes of border-town life, acid and disturbing in their contrast of desperate immigrants and a greedy, shallow American suburbia. No other director in Hollywood was more boldly out of step with the early Reagan years.

When John Irving's *The Hotel New Hampshire* appeared in the early 80s, some of the figureheads of American puritanism were grey eminences at the White House. Today they're regrouping on the sidelines, but with an unhealthy number of followers, and Tony's adaptation of a novel that celebrates pan-sexuality (interracial and incestuous as well as gay and lesbian) still gives the impression of a party on the barricades. In the novel's witty and fanciful attack on the American way of respectability, he found his most personal material and his most seriously irresponsible film. If at times it seems a bit scrambled in its effort to compress so many events into the space of two hours, this is a relatively minor price to pay for an abundance of riches. The mixture of charm, ebullience and emotional ambiguity is unique in Tony's work. Behind all the exuberant games there's a touch of wistfulness, as if the characters represent his ideal family, his dream of a community of adventurers who improvise their lives and incidentally embrace the varieties of sexual experience with an openness Tony admires but can never really share. The style is reminiscent of *Tom Jones* in its non-stop pace and playfulness, but as the anecdotes pile up there are unexpectedly dark moments that create a stronger underlying tension.

Tony always liked to work fast, and his pursuit of immediacy had a double purpose: to surprise the moment and to stretch the inadequate budget on which he nearly always worked. This time he was under greater financial pressure than usual, as some of the back-up money came from his own pocket. But there's another reason, I believe, for the sense of urgency behind *The Hotel New Hampshire*. It was a movie made, more than any other, on orders from Tony's unconscious.

Blue Sky was completed in 1990, less than a year before Tony died and only a few weeks before the production company went bankrupt and the movie became a frozen asset that still awaits release. Explosive on more than one level, it deals with the secret testing of nuclear weapons during the 60s, and the military establishment's attempt to cover up the dangers of radiation. For about two-thirds of its length, this is a completely riveting movie. It tells two parallel stories, of the scientist up against ruthless superiors who commit him to a mental hospital when he threatens to expose the cover-up, and of his fragile Southern wife,

slowly becoming ■ not so distant cousin of Blanche du Bois under the pressure of a bleakly isolated existence. The scenes of their mutual disintegration, and inability to help each other, are among the most powerful in Tony's work; it's only when the wife suddenly gets a hold on reality that the story's hold on it becomes less secure. But although the climax owes too much to formula melodrama, Tony handles it more confidently than in *The Border*, and Jessica Lange's extraordinary performance almost closes the credibility gap.

During his American period, Tony worked sporadically and sometimes notably in television. *A Death in Canaan* (1978), an early example of the docudrama, is based on the story of a 17-year-old boy manipulated by the police into confessing that he murdered his mother. Tony found the pressure of television, low budgets and short schedules stimulating in a familiar way. The problem lay in the tunnel vision of network executives, who imposed a conventional subplot on the material. But Tony imposed his own sense of excitement on the central scenes, and there are few works in this limited genre with such strong performances and, even rarer, visual personality. Unlike many film directors, Tony never saw television as a comedown. On the contrary, he believed that "Television is the future" and approached it as another adventure, another world to conquer. "Ultimately the basis of film and TV is the same – an image on a screen," he writes in his memoir. "Beyond that, the only difference is audience response and tolerance. In one night, *A Death in Canaan* was probably seen by more people than have ever seen many of my most successful and acclaimed movies... That's why it's so important that TV should be freed from the corporations and bureaucracies that have seized it."

Twelve years later, with a *tour de force* for the small screen, he proved his point. *Hills Like White Elephants* is Tony's contribution to an HBO trilogy with the generic title *Women and Men*. Working with a completely free hand, a creative adaptation of Hemingway's two-character story by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne, and two perfectly cast actors, Melanie Griffith and James Woods, he made a television movie that has personality on every level. The Hemingway story, five pages long, describes an episode in the relationship of a young American couple on vacation in Spain some time in the early 30s. Waiting for a train at a country station, they engage in a typically laconic, circular dialogue about whether or not the girl is going to go through with an abortion. Nothing is resolved, but whatever she decides, the relationship will probably not survive. The movie, 25 minutes long, expands the episode without inflating it. Wryly low-key, it has a poetic touch that echoes Antonioni, its two wandering figures isolated in an almost abstractly plain yet atmospheric setting.

A sense of place was always one of Tony's strongest talents, from the grimy Salford of *A Taste of Honey* to the almost lunar Southern Atlantic shoreline of *Blue Sky*. He had the traveller's eye, and his curiosity about the world took him from Central America to China, from

New Guinea to Nepal, Rwanda to Egypt. He shot movies in Turkey, Ethiopia, Australia and Canada, and turned an abandoned hamlet in the south of France into an extraordinary country estate. Writing about these places with the same passion as he looks back on his movies, he makes you really see them. You also feel the compulsive pace at which he lived. Always impatiently pursuing the future, he had no qualms about turning his back on what he calls "the great grey sea of the past" – until, early in 1984, he suddenly began to write *Long Distance Runner*. He finished it, between work on projects, in a year – and immediately decided that it wasn't much good. "Boring" was the word with which he dismissed it to me, and "boring" was one of Tony's most severe verdicts. In this case he was certainly wrong, but exactly why he put the typescript away in a closet remains as uncertain as to why he embarked on it in the first place.

It was not from a need to put his whole life in perspective. The only moments of introspection occur in the final pages, and they're carefully selective. "What have I learned about myself?" Tony asks. His "constant drift to America" is the first answer, "a clearer perception of myself as a traveller" the next, and the last is a defence of the pattern, and what some people consider the lack of it, in his work. "Oh, where is that sense of unifying style?" the critic would say, trying to lasso one out as a cowboy does a steer in a corral." He answers this by insisting that what appears as a frequent change of direction is really a straight line, his unswerving response to the untried and the new, and to living in "an exceptionally free time when all kinds of ways of hearing, doing and seeing coexist and are available to be used."

Valid enough, so far as it goes, but it leaves out "the poetic and humanist life of movies" that, elsewhere in the memoir, Tony describes as their central tradition. His own movies stem from it. Some artists explore, from different angles, a single world; others explore different worlds from the same angle. Tony belonged to the second kind. It seems ironic to bring up George Cukor in this connection because Cukor's work grew out of the studio style Tony despised, but in fact internal and not external conditions always have the last word. Working for major studios, Cukor could move from *Little Women* to *Holiday*, from *The Marrying Kind* to *A Star is Born*, and stamp them with his own imagination as surely as Tony, under completely opposite circumstances, put his personal signature on *Look Back in Anger*, *The Hotel New Hampshire* and *Blue Sky*. Again, whether made for RKO using all the complex technical resources of a studio, or shot in North Africa with constant interruptions when the money ran out, *Citizen Kane* and *Othello* are unmistakably from the hand of Orson Welles.

At the end of his memoir, Tony claims that his reason for writing it was "to record where I'm at, or believe I'm at, in this one moment of history". He then quotes Carson McCullers: "This minute is passing. And it will never come again." Perhaps this is what led Tony's eldest daughter Natasha to suggest in her foreword, "We think that he was diagnosed as being HIV

Until the moment of physical collapse, I thought Tony might beat the odds. His death moved me even more on account of his attempt to say no to it

positive around this time, so maybe that inspired him to set down a record of his life for us, his daughters." Lindsay's introduction also suggests that Tony was writing chiefly for his daughters, but adds that "he wrote only of the things he wanted his girls – and us – to know." This, at any rate, we can be completely sure of.

What Tony wanted us to know he set down with the verve, humour and good humour that was so much a part of him, and the occasional sacrifice of fact to dramatic effect that was a part of him as well. But one thing he didn't want us to know, most of us had private knowledge of already, and perhaps he decided not to publish his memoir, partly at least, to evade being accused of evasion. There is no mention of the bisexuality that was surely a key factor in his life. This part of himself he left hidden, like the typescript, in a closet. I dislike the premise of "outing", with its implication of revealing a guilty secret, but to ignore this aspect of Tony's life not only falsifies him, but slurs his memory by lining oneself up with those who regard the secret as guilty. Among them, evidently, is Kathleen Tynan, whose horribly spurious record of their "friendship" appeared in *Vanity Fair* a few months after Tony's death.

Even though he introduced me to several of his male lovers, Tony's ground rule forbade us to discuss his sexual identity. It was part of the game that I should take it for granted. He was far too intelligent to feel ashamed of being bisexual, but obviously it made him uncomfortable. "My relationship with Grizelda has now lasted some 15 years," he writes at one point, passing over the fact that for fifteen years they spent most of their respective lives in Los Angeles and Europe. After his marriage broke up, Tony basically lived alone. It was part of the "well-defined" lifestyle that he never defines, and I can only guess at the reasons for the smokescreen he puts up here. Did he feel that his sexual identity, which made it impossible for him to sustain a long-term relationship under the same roof, was a problem he'd failed to solve? Did the sexual traveller secretly long for home, and the *Long Distance Runner* hope to create a public image that would compensate for his fear of loneliness? And how important was it that Tony came of professional age in the stone age 50s, when open sexual non-conformism was a threat to almost anyone's career? In any case, his lovers were always *Back Street* figures, and he could never allow himself to become deeply involved with them. Luckily for him, if not for them, he didn't want to. But at least they knew from the start that Tony followed his own imperatives of personal adventure and freedom of action.

I don't know how much these tensions cost him emotionally, and wonder if Tony ever did. Some kind of ongoing conflict is a driving force

behind every artist, and many never question it, either because they're too busy or they suspect it would be counter-productive. Tony's whole life was a high-wire act, and he seems to have handled his sexual identity as one of the trickier parts of the act. In spite of his complexities, he kept himself all of a piece. You can't split his nature into virtues and faults, strengths and weaknesses. They were inseparable and organic as formations in a rock.

The spiritual loner was extremely gregarious and loved to entertain, whether in Los Angeles or his own Hotel New Hampshire in the south of France. Being a husband didn't suit him, but being a father did, and he had a wonderful relationship with his daughters. Although his marriage failed to last, admiration endured for "my remarkable and generous ex-wife" (equally independent, equally misunderstood, they remained mutually supportive and continued to recognise much of themselves in each other, as her own autobiography makes clear). And in spite of his sharp instinct for the reality of things, Tony reacted to the first signs of Aids on his body with what some people would (and did) call denial. He told several friends, including myself, that the doctors believed he was suffering from "some new form of Parkinson's disease", with a note of expostulation in his voice that defied you to disbelieve him. Wearing a long-sleeved sweater to cover the lesions on his arms, he continued to hold meetings with movie executives and seek backing for projects. One of them was an adaptation of Maugham's *The Magician*. Although seriously ill by the time he began work on it, he managed to complete a first draft script. Later, even more obviously stricken, he travelled to London to cast a stage production of *The Cherry Orchard*, with Vanessa as Madame Ranevskaya.

Almost until the moment of complete physical collapse, I thought that Tony might somehow beat the odds. It seemed more than a coincidence that he was attracted to *The Magician*, who believed in the overriding power of will. Rather than denial, his struggle came from a determination to meet one more challenge, and to follow his lifelong principle of never taking no for an answer. His death moved me even more on account of his fierce, uncompromising attempt to say no to it.

Looking back on it now, I'm struck by a painfully ironic link between a part of Tony's life he never publicly acknowledged and the disease that cut it short. He always believed in taking risks, took and got away with so many of them. As well as an artist, Tony was one of the true animators and vital presences of his time, and his achievement as a whole adds up to far more than the sum of its parts. He created a new climate, not only in British theatre and films, but wherever he worked. As an enemy of the establishment on both sides of the Atlantic, he cared little for its honours. He took failure in his stride and never coasted on success. And his talisman was a poem by Auden: "So I wish you first a/Sense of theatre; only/Those who love illusion/And know it will go far..." I only wish he'd had time (his other enemy) to go further. *Long Distance Runner, A Memoir* is published by Faber and Faber at £17.50

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Flickers

Lee Marvin walking, low angle, through LAX in *Point Blank*; footsteps like gunshots. The sound of wind in the trees in *Blow-up*. Driving shots through the windscreen in *Vertigo*. Kim Novak asking Kirk Douglas about shaving the dimple in his chin in *Strangers When We Meet*. The woman's blink in *La Jetée*, a film composed otherwise only of photographs. Robert Mitchum's walk across the rodeo ground in *The Lusty Men*. The number of fucks in the history of cinema (on and off screen). Fritz Lang's statement: that in the end it is necessary to finish what one has started. Ray Milland's vision in *The Man with the X-Ray Eyes*. Orson Welles' hair in *The Third Man*, his overcoat and his shoes. Manny Farber's observation on a great moment of cinematic space: Bogart crossing the street to the bookstore in *The Big Sleep* and looking up at the sky. The plughole in *Psycho*. Warren Oates' bemused grin; his wretched singing of "Guantánamera" in *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*. Magwitch in the graveyard of *Great Expectations*. Clu Gulager flipping aside his jacket to show his gun in *The Killers*; the gesture repeated in *Thief* as James Caan sees off a man in a bar cutting in on Tuesday Weld. The gaucheness of Anna Karina in *Le Petit Soldat*. How Lee Marvin holds a gun. Christopher Walken in the credits for *King of New York* – the face of a revenant – later confirmed by the line, "Back from the dead". The loneliness of Diane Keaton in *The Godfather*. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy in *The Shining*. Doorways (thresholds) in the films of Fritz Lang. The way Harvey Keitel's head hits the pillow as the Ronettes start "Be My Baby" in *Mean Streets*. Dean Martin's hat in *Some Come Running*. Clint Eastwood's chipped tooth. Genevieve Bujold's eyes. The tree-house in *Swiss Family Robinson*. The eaves of the attic room where Mitchum kills Shelley Winters in *The Night of the Hunter*. Bad early Jack Nicholson performances. Bresson's note on the ejaculatory force of the eye. Jeanne Moreau's shoes in *The Diary of a Chambermaid*. The last walk in *The Wild Bunch*. (The sound of a pump-action gun being worked.) Anna Karina cycling in *Bande à part*. Peter Lorre's oyster eyes in *M*. A shot of a plane passing over Powis Square in *Performance*. Three young girls walking down a road in Iceland in Marker's *Sans Soleil*. Ralph Meeker on being asked who he is in *Kiss Me Deadly*: "Who am I? Who are you?" The deathly quiet suburban streets at the beginning of *Badlands*. The slyness of the actress's look in *Un Chien Andalou*. Windows in Kieślowski's *A Short Film About Love*. The terror of the mountains in Wellman's *Track of the Cat*. A country gas station in *Two-Lane Blacktop*. The eroticism of *Woman of the Dunes*. The tenderness of the pickpocketing sequences in *Pickpocket*. A Jancsó travelling shot. James Stewart having to act with Dion. A brief close-up of an unknown actress in Loach's TV version of *Up the Junction*, looking fed-up, walking down the street. Nuns in films. Noise of a chain-saw. Claudia Cardinale's voice. Alain Delon's isolation. Any face in a crowd. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. The assassination on the steps in the rain in *Foreign Correspondent* (umbrellas in films).

Novelist and filmmaker Chris Petit raids the movie library inside his head, as he moves from 'Point Blank' to 'The End'

Anton Walbrook's alien speech in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. Timothy Evans' hanging place in *10 Rillington Place*. Morricone's music in *Once Upon a Time in the West*. All the drinks and drugs ever taken by all the people who worked in movies (cinema as narcotic). Charles Bronson's fear of tunnelling in *The Great Escape* (Donald Pleasence's blindness in the same). The train arriving in the station by the brothers Lumière. Jane Birkin looking through the keyhole in Rivette's *L'Amour par terre*. The fevered eroticism of Clara Calami's hands in *Ossessione*. Robert Vaughn catching flies in *The Magnificent Seven*. The emptiness of Handke's *The Left-Handed Woman*. Burton's drunken driving in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Steve McQueen's haircut in *The Cincinnati Kid*. The insecurity of Rita Hayworth. Lino Ventura crossing a railway track in *Le Deuxième souffle*. Straub and Huillet's framing. Sue Lloyd's line to Michael Caine in *The Ipcress File*: "Do you always wear glasses?" (A. "Yes, except when I'm in bed.") The gaunt officer in *The Battle of Algiers*. Graham Greene's cameo in *Day for Night*. Edith Scob's bandages in *Les Yeux sans visage*. The vulnerability of Kurt Raab's serial killer in *Tenderness of the Wolves*. The quizzical narcissism of Warren Beatty. The boisterous laughter of Ava Gardner in *The Night of the Iguana*. Dreyer's *Vampyr*. The blonde Russian actress in *Ballad of a Soldier*. A still of Lee J. Cobb's cliff-top death in *Man of the West*, hand thrown high, back arched. *You Only Live Once*, "the story of the last romantic couple" (J-L Godard). The predatoriness of Connery's James Bond. The restlessness of Cassavetes' camera in *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie*. The way Woody Allen ripped off Eric Rohmer (the shirt Zouzou buys the man in *Love in the Afternoon*). Busted careers. Delon's line in *Nouvelle Vague*, "I inspire derision." The increasingly desolate look of James Mason ("The saddest eyes in cinema," according to Greene.) The failure of British cinema. The directness of the gaze of women in the films of Ingmar Bergman. Orson Welles' remark that most directors are not found out. The wasted life of Louise Brooks. Gene

Hackman eating ice cream after cold turkey in *French Connection II*. The foolhardiness of Werner Herzog. The missing tiles in the floor at the beginning of *Rosemary's Baby* (cracks in the wall in *Repulsion*). The desire to see again films I hated at the time (*Le Bonheur*, *Celine et Julie Go Boating*). *Manhunter* versus *The Silence of the Lambs*. Robby Müller's camera for Wim Wenders. Sleeping Japanese passengers in *Sans Soleil*. The exemplary career of Raúl Ruiz. The 13-year gap in Buñuel's film-making. Photographs in cinema. Fredi Murer's only feature, *Alpine Fire* (1984) – Buñuel's Mexican *Wuthering Heights* relocated to Switzerland and contained within a single family – and the fact that he hasn't made a feature since. The magnificence of Delphine Seyrig in *Daughters of Darkness*. The Wednesday in *Big Wednesday*. Tracking shots in Kieślowski's *The Double Life of Véronique*. The critical writings of J-L Godard, Manny Farber and David Thomson. Silk stockings on screen (*Silk Stockings*). Jerry-built French architecture and an out-of-season coastal resort in *Les Valseuses*. Bad weather (the climate of northern France) in the films of J-P Melville. (The nostalgia of German expatriates in Hollywood for European weather: hence film noir.) Lisa Eichhorn in *Cutter's Way* (a film of lost careers – Passer, Heard, Eichhorn). Kenneth Anger's mapping of the other Hollywood. David Niven's smirk. Zapruder's 8mm film of the Dallas assassination. (Costner's line, "Back, and to the left," in *JFK*.) The greatness of Don Siegel. *The Switchboard Operator* and her cat. Richard Boone (the unsuccessful Lee Marvin) in *The Night of the Following Day*. Snow in *McCabe and Mrs Miller* and Leonard Cohen's soundtrack. Exploited Mexican actresses as sex-objects. The belief by dull practitioners that cinema cannot be transcended. Michael Klier's *The Giant*, a feature-length film of back-to-back video surveillance images. The frequently unadventurous use of music in film (the dominance of picture over sound.) Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the ultimate desert island/cul-de-sac film: the director as Prospero. Video. The fact that films don't say *The End* any more.



Shoe-shined boy: Orson Welles' brogue in 'The Third Man'

BEI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS

REVIEWS

Reviews,
synopses and
full credits for
all the month's
new films

L'Accompagnatrice

France 1992

Director: Claude Miller

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Gala Films

Production Companies
Film Par Film/Les Films
de la Boissière Orly
Films Sedif France
3 Cinema

Executive Producer
Jean-José Richer

Producer
Jean-Louis Livi

Production Executive
London:
Patrick Cassavetti

Portugal:
Manuel Costa e Silva

Production Co-ordinator
London:

Lucinda Sturgis

Production Manager
Daniel Chevalier

London:
Linda Bruce

Assistant Directors
Valérie Orhain-Girard

Nathan Miller

Screenplay
Claude Miller

Luc Béraud
Based on the novel by

Nina Berberova

Director of Photography
Yves Angelo

In colour

Editor
Albert Jurgenson

Production Designer
Jean-Pierre Kohut

Svelko

Art Director
London:

Michael Howells

Set Design
Bernadette

Saint-Loubert

Effects
Gilbert Pieri

Georges Demetrau

Musical Director
Alain Jomy

Musio Extracts
"Quartet Op. 18 No. 1

in F major" by Ludwig

van Beethoven; "Vèpres

Solennelles: Laudate

Dominum"; "Missa

Solemnis K139:

Quoniam" and "Les

noces de Figaro: Air de

Barberine" by

Wolfgang Amadeus

Mozart; "Wiegenlied"

by Richard Strauss;

"Scènes d'enfants:

Des Pays Lointains"

by Robert Schumann;

"Trio: Le Patre au

Rocher" by Franz

Schubert; "Nuits d'été:

spectre de la rose"

and "Nuits d'été: La

Villanelle" by Hector

Berlioz; "Thais: Air

du Miroir" by

Jules Massenet;

"Lambeth Walk"

by Gay-Furber-Rose

Music Performed by
Piano:

Angeline Pondepeyre

Clarinet:

Philippe Cuper

Orchestra and Chorus:

Budapest Symphony

Orchestra

Quartet:

Rosamonde

Singer:

Laurence Monteyrol

Costume Design
Jacqueline Bouchard

Elena Safonova's

costumes by:

Lolita Lempicka

Wardrobe Supervisor
Anne David

Make-up
Thi-Loan Nguyen

Sound Editor
Reine Wekstein

Sound Recordists
Paul Lainé

Gérard Lamps

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist
Jacques Levy

Sound Effects
Jean-Pierre Lelong

Subtitles

Cast
Richard Bohringer

Charles Brice

Elena Safonova

Irène Brice

Romane Bohringer

Sophie Vasseur

Bernard Verley

Jacques Cénat

Samuel Labarthe

Jacques Fabert

Nelly Borgeaud

Madame Vasseur

Julien Rasmann

Benoît Weizman

Jean-Pierre Kohut Svelko

General Heller

Claude Rich

Minister

Gabriel Cattand

Parisian Impresario

Neils Dubost

Young Man on Train

Valérie Bettencourt

Juliette

Alain Jomy

Clarinet Player

Gilbert Babon

Royal Coachman

Florence Rouge

Manicurist

Murray Grownwall

German

Yves Elliot

Butcher

Sacha Briquet

Dignitary

10,002 feet

111 minutes

Subtitles

Occupied Paris, 1942. Sophie Vasseur, a working-class girl, shares an apartment with her mother, a piano teacher. When Sophie is offered a job as a piano accompanist to the singer Irène Brice, she seizes the opportunity to escape her dull and unrewarding life. Sophie is immediately impressed by the opulent lifestyle of Madame Brice and her husband

Charles, a successful businessman.

Sophie is pleased when Irène takes her into her confidence. She agrees to become a go-between, taking letters to Irène's lover, Jacques Fabert, a member of the Resistance. As Irène prepares for an important concert she asks Sophie to move in with her to make practising easier. Sophie's mother warns her that the Brices are known collaborators, but she doesn't care.

Irène's concert is a great success and she is invited to perform at Vichy in front of France's puppet government. But Charles is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the compromises he is being forced to make and refuses an invitation to dine with a German general. At Vichy, an old family friend warns Charles to be careful and urges him to flee the country.

When they return to Paris after Irène's concert at Vichy, the Brices' apartment has been ransacked by the authorities. Charles decides that he and Irène must leave immediately for London where he will join de Gaulle's Free French. Sophie agrees to go with them and they travel incognito through Spain and Portugal. In Lisbon Sophie meets a young Jewish boy, Benoît Weizman, who is also travelling to London. During the crossing Benoît declares his love for Sophie, but on arrival in England, Sophie says she cannot marry him because of her commitment to Irène. At immigration control the Brices are detained because of their connections with the Vichy régime. They are released only after the intervention of Jacques Fabert, who is now working in London.

In England, Charles tries to re-establish his business connections, while Irène starts to rebuild her singing career. She auditions for the BBC and the resulting concert is a triumph. There is talk of a series of concerts in the United States, but Irène prefers to stay in London so that she can be near Jacques. Charles becomes increasingly lonely and frustrated in London and, depressed by Irène's continued infidelity, eventually shoots himself. After the war, Irène and Jacques leave together for America and Sophie returns alone to Paris.

France's film-makers have never really got to grips with the German occupation of their country during the Second World War. Recent half-hearted attempts to do so, like Claude Berri's *Uranus* or Bertrand Blier's *Merci la vie* have merely reduced the period to 'Allo 'Allo-type farce. And although Claude Miller's *L'Accompagnatrice* is not a comedy, its reference points are exactly the same: decadent collaborators, seedy black marketeers, clean-cut Resistance heroes, amoral bourgeois beauties and Nazis with a taste for classical music. Even the archive wartime footage, which Miller has added to give an air of moral seriousness to his film, serves to reinforce the feeling that you've seen it all before. Similarly, the muted brown tones in which Miller has chosen to shoot most scenes is presumably supposed to give the impres-



No resistance: Elena Safonova

sion of an old photograph. But it is more sludge than sepia and fails even as a stylistic device.

However, the film's uniform visual and narrative dullness does act as a pretty effective anaesthetic. And it also fits a certain, rather unpleasant way of looking at French history in which these stories and images that we've seen a thousand times take on a mythical quality. Collaboration is no longer something that happened in France at a particular point in time, it is merely part of some great panoply of human fairy tales. The French experience is thus rendered universal.

Most of the characters in *L'Accompagnatrice* are easily recognisable from this grim, ahistorical dumb-show. Only Charles Brice and Sophie herself are given enough definition to move, decide and doubt like real human beings. But even they are granted this freedom so that they can later discover their true roles in the drama — he as the cuckold, she as the accompanist.

In a crashingly dull piece of symbolism, the sea-crossing to England acts as the defining moment of the film. As German planes dive-bomb their ship, Charles can temporarily shrug off his sordid racketeer past and become a morally upright hero as Irène's protector and Sophie's surrogate father. Meanwhile, for the duration of the voyage, Sophie can step out of Irène's shadow to allow herself a brief love-affair. Back on dry land, however, they both revert to type.

L'Accompagnatrice would be entirely without interest if this lifeless tableau approach to French history didn't have such a vampire-like effect on present-day France. The character of Sophie is familiar not just because she is such a cliché. She is familiar, too, because she is so representative of France's notoriously conservative Mitterrand generation, the target audience of the film. Like them, Sophie is bored with politics, in awe of the bourgeoisie, blissfully unaware of the burden of history. She is happy to act as an accompanist and nothing more.

Martin Bright

Atlantis

France 1991

Director: Luc Besson

Certificate
U

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Companies
Gaumont/Cecchi
Gori Group

Executive Producers
Claude Besson
Music:
Claude Serra
Ray William

Production Manager
Monique Pautas

Assistant Directors
Vincent Ravalec
Marcia De Caviedes
Brent Spector
Pat Purcell
Catherine Thabourin

Director of Photography
Christian Petron

In colour

2nd Unit Camera Operators
Mathieu Schiffman
Vincent Jeannot

Video Co-ordinator
Pascale Parillaud

Optical Engineer
François Laurent

Editor
Luc Besson

Music
Eric Serra

Music Extracts
"La Sonnanbula"
by Vincenzo Bellini,
performed by Maria
Callas, Orchestra de
la Scala de Milan

Music Performed by
The London Royal
Philharmonic
Orchestra,
The John McCarthy
Ambrosian Opera
Chorus

Music Director
John Altman

Sound Editor
Patrice Crisotet

Sound Recordists
William Flageollet

Music:
Dolby stereo
Dominik Borde
Matt Howe

Foley Recordist
Michel Barlier

Sound Effects
Eric Mauer
Marie Guesner

Foley Artist
Jérôme Lévy

Arctic Expert
André Laperrière

Scientific/Technical Consultant
Pierre Laboute

Specialists
Marine Mammals:
Mandy Rodriguez
Shark:
Yves Lefèvre
White Shark:
Rodney Fox
Ice Diving:
Philippe Cagan

Helicopter Pilot
Roland Ory

Chief Diver
Jean-Marc Bour

Atlantis Captain
Michel Feuga

6765 feet
75 minutes

Atlantis consists of a series of short episodes of underwater life, with a musical soundtrack but no commentary. The episodes are self-contained, each concentrating on a particular example of marine life, with their borders marked by changes in the accompanying music. An episode might tell a story – the search of sharks for food, for instance – or might simply capture the movements of its subject.

Filming over three years from late 1988, in seas across the world, Luc Besson intended to create an "underwater opera". The film is also an

implicit polemic against human abuse of the planet, since Besson chose to concentrate on fauna and flora threatened with extinction. However, while recording imminent losses, Atlantis is also a celebration. By regularly changing subject matter – no episode lasts for more than ten or so minutes – its structure works towards presenting a collection of underwater riches. The soundtrack is composed or assembled, with music and natural sounds often nicely integrated, by Eric Serra who also worked with Besson on *The Big Blue*. Playing up its subjects' connotations, it is playful when dolphins are framed, menacing if sharks appear. More distinct are the Maria Callas aria that makes the majestic mantra ray recall nothing so much as the Wagner-borne helicopters from *Apocalypse Now*, and the cheap electro-disco number which wittily underscores a succession of kissing marine couples.

Music apart, Besson infuses drama into the documentary by shaping the footage around a goal (as in the shark episode) or by breaking up an episode with an arresting cameo (once, memorably, from a madcap crab). Or else he exploits the qualities of a location, as when the camera approaches a forbidding polar ice formation via a beautifully-textured narrow crevice. The cinematography, by Christian Petron, is hugely impressive, partly thanks to the technology used which included specially designed underwater Cinemascope equipment. More importantly, Besson's team is busy, alert to the striking perspective, managing several times to disorientate by taking advantage of the floating camera's ability to reshape the surroundings in a way difficult to emulate above ground. A declared labour of love, ultimately Atlantis is 'only' a very good underwater documentary. For all its claims to be an exemplary exercise in integrating music and image, it is likely that the viewer's interest will largely depend upon how much he wants to watch marine life. Even the polemical element is lost on those of us unable to identify an endangered species or plant. However, it certainly compares favourably with *The Big Blue*, Besson's earlier homage to the sea, not least by its omissions: Atlantis is, happily, free of that film's lame story and characters.

Robert Yates



Big blue 2: Luc Besson's 'Atlantis'

Boiling Point

USA 1993

Director: James B Harris

Certificate
15

Distributor
Guild

Production Companies
Warner Bros
Hexagon Films

Executive Producers
Rene Bonnell
Olivier Granier

Co-executive Producer
Philippe Maigret

Producers
Marc Frydman
Leonardo de la Fuente

Co-producer
Patrick Beaufront

Line Producer
Ramsey Thomas

Production Office
Co-ordinator
Barbara Rosing-Hoke

Unit Production Manager
Ramsey Thomas

Location Manager
T.J. Healy II

Costing
Al Guarino

Voice:
Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors
Jules Lichtman
Philip M. Krystosek

Screenplay
James B. Harris

Based on the novel
Money Men by
Gerald Petievich

Director of Photography
King Baggot

Colour
Foto-Kem

prints by:
Technicolor

Directors of Aerial Photography
David Butler
Rexford Metz

Steadicam Operator
Kirk Gardner

Editor
Jerry Brady

Production Designer
Ron Foreman

Art Director
Russ Smith

Set Decorator
Rick Caprarello

Set Dresser
Helen Kozora

Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Lon Carlucci

Special Effects
Special Effects
Unlimited:
Jim Doyle
Josh Hakian
John Cazin

Music/Underscore
Orchestrations
Cory Lerios
John D'Andrea

Big Band Music Producer
Daniel May

Music Supervisor
Dominique Forma

Music Editor
Patrick O'Sullivan

Music Co-ordinator
David May

Songs
"Money Men Blues"
by Mitchell Marcoulter,
performed by Sweet
Pea Atkinson;
"Money Men" by and
performed by Mitchell
Marcoulter; "They're
Gonna Get You"
by Daniel May,
performed by Zero Ted,
Steve Wood; "Don't You
Forget It" by Cory
Lerios, Bob Marlette,
performed by
Cory Lerios; "Dream"
by Johnny Mercer,

"Jersey Bounce"
by Bobby Platter,
Edward Johnson,
Tiny Bradshaw,
Robert Wright,
"I Was Starting to Feel
Romantic", "Stompin'
With Red" by Daniel
May performed
by The Danny May
Orchestra; "First
Things First" by
and performed
by Daniel May

Costume Design
Molly Maginnis

Costume Supervisor
Valerie L. Zielonka

Make-up Artist
Allison Gordin

Titles/Opticals
Title House

Supervising Sound Editor
David Lewis Yewdall

Sound Editors
Steve Rice
Stacey A. Foiles
Paul Jyrala
Pirjo Jyrala
James Selteneich

ADR Supervisor
Barbara J. Boguski

Sound Recordists
Russell C. Fager

Music:
Ernie Scheesley

ADR Recordist
Richard Rogers

Foley Recordist
Ron Eedrosian
Dolby stereo

Supervising Sound Re-recordist
Don Cahn

Sound Re-recordists
Artie Torgersen
Jim Cook

Foley Artists
John Post
Lisa Houle

Walls Group
Ruth Britt
Judi Durand
Cheryl Tyre-Smith
David Randolph
Charles Bazaldua
Robert Caso
Barbara Iley
Carlyle King
David McCharen
Greg Finley
JD Hall

Aerial Co-ordinator
Bruce Meade

Stunt Co-ordinator
Chuck Waters

Stunts
Jophery Clifford Brown
J. Mark Donaldson
Orwin Harvey
Linda Fetters Howard
Fred Lerner
Allen Michael Lerner
Vincent Mazzella Jr
Jim Waters
Rhino Michaels
Tom Oldberg
Janet Lee Orcutt
Mary Peters
Denise Lynn Roberts
Walter Robles
Debby Lynn Ross
Jim A. Stephan
George Peter Wilbur
John Moio

Helicopter Pilot
John David Sarviss

Cast
Wesley Snipes
Jimmy Mercer
Dennis Hopper
Red Diamond
Lolita Davidovich
Vikki
Viggo Mortensen
Ronnie
Seymour Cassel
Leach
Jonathan Banks
Max
Christine Elise
Carol
Tony Lo Bianco
Dio
Valerie Perrine
Mona
James Tolkan
Levitt
Paul Gleason
Transaction Man
Lorraine Evanoff
Connie
Stephanie Williams
Sally
Tobin Bell
Roth
Bobby Hesse
Steve

Dan Hedaya
Brady
George Gerdes
Henderson
James Pickens Jr
Prison Officer
Keith Nickles
Cook
Rick Dean
Bartender
John Petevich
Hotel Security Officer
Mark Phelan
Banner
Nancy Sullivan
Clerk
John Lander
Coroner's Deputy
Lisa Kaseman
Ballroom Dancer
Janet May
Vocalist

8,295 feet
92 minutes

Los Angeles. US Treasury agents Mercer, Brady and Russo mount an undercover operation around a dingy Hollywood motel. However, the bust goes wrong when Russo is shot dead and his \$10,000 'buy money' is stolen by Ronnie, an impressionable young crook in league with Red Diamond, a dapper con artist just released from jail. Mercer visits his ex-wife; Diamond visits his waitress wife Mona; and Ronnie visits his girlfriend. All receive frosty receptions. Diamond calls on mobster Tony Dio, gives him \$8,000 and is given a mere seven days to raise the balance of \$42,000 he owes from the time before he went to jail.

Threatened with a transfer to Newark, Mercer persuades his boss Levitt to keep him on the case so he can catch his partner's killer. Their meeting is in the same hotel in which call girl Vikki plies her trade and which Diamond frequents. A lead takes Mercer first to jail, where he interviews Freddy, an imprisoned counterfeiter, and then to a bar where he poses as a potential buyer of counterfeit money to Virgil Leach, the holder of the imprisoned man's stash. When arrested, Leach refuses to co-operate, even when Mercer threatens action against his girlfriend Connie. Diamond meets Vikki in the hotel bar and invites her to go old-time dancing with him at the Palace ballroom. Walking her back to the hotel, Diamond almost crosses paths with Mercer – who is himself having an affair with Vikki.

Diamond visits Max, a crooked lawyer, and gets the brush off when he asks for \$50,000 for keeping his mouth shut about their illicit dealings. Mercer and Brady go to Connie's apartment, but are too late to prevent her killing herself. Ronnie goes to Max's office, posing as a potential seller of counterfeit money. A meeting is arranged for that night between Ronnie and one of Max's men. Ronnie shoots the man, then drives over the corpse. However, the cash he takes from the dead man's money belt also proves to be counterfeit. The next day, Mercer interrogates Max and finally extricates the name

◀ he wants: Red Diamond. Realising that time is running out for him to pay back his debt, Diamond lies to Ronnie, claiming that not only has he killed an important Mafia man, but that there are also witnesses to the crime – his plan being to get Ronnie to kill Tony Dio.

Diamond takes Vikki dancing to the Palace again, while Mercer visits his ex-wife and child and discovers her with another man. Meeting Vikki on the street, he asks her to go with him to Newark and she refuses. Diamond visits Mona and says that he'll be free if things go right for him that night, and tells her to meet him at the Palace. Tailed by Mercer and Brady, Diamond and Ronnie go to Tony Dio's place and Ronnie shoots both Dio and a body-guard while Diamond grabs a substantial amount of cash. The pair separate, agreeing to meet later at the Palace, but Diamond is arrested by Mercer.

Mercer takes Diamond to the dance hall and allows him to approach Ronnie alone. Diamond tells Ronnie that he (Ronnie) has drawn the cops there and says that he should shoot his way out. Ronnie dies in a hail of police bullets, and Diamond is captured and driven away by the police past Mona who is waiting outside. Mercer and Vikki subsequently go to Newark together, while Diamond, sentenced to life imprisonment, plans to appeal.

James B. Harris's films as writer-director-producer characteristically present a murky black comic vision in which the line between right and wrong, cop and criminal is blurred. Rather than dealing in fixed moral certainties, his is a savagely ironic and sometimes subversive world in which everyone manipulates everyone else in a brutal game. There are only two rules: no one can be trusted and a good line of comic dialogue is always worth more than developing the plot or characters in a believable way.

In *Fast Walking* (1981), James Woods' corrupt prison guard, Frank 'Fast Walking' Miniver (so named because of his peculiar dancing gait), is not really very different from Tim McIntire's top-dog convict – and both share the same lover, Kay Lenz. In *Cop* (1988), Woods' sleazy detective tells his little daughter violent bedtime stories and uses a shotgun calmly to blast the defenceless villain in the closing scene. Containing a much-used shotgun, a shared lover (Vikki) and some deft fast walking from Dennis Hopper, *Boiling Point* can be seen as the third part in an unofficial Harris trilogy of black comic crime and punishment. Its opening sequence features a graceful long shot in which all we see are Diamond's feet and flamboyant black and white shoes as he confidently strides along in the street to the strains of an old-fashioned dance number. The implication both here and in *Fast Walking* is the same: the stylish movement defines the man. Both men are colourful, wilfully eccentric individuals adrift in a world of conformity. And, where *Fast Walking* is

set in and around a jail, *Boiling Point* features two ex-convicts, Diamond and Ronnie, just released from behind bars. It's an obvious continuation of themes: two ex-cons trapped by their own delusions, following on from a guard and a convict who are similarly imprisoned.

However, compared with *Fast Walking*, which builds a fascinating tension between the amoral guard and the even more amoral convict, *Boiling Point*'s attempt to work up similar parallels between Diamond and the near burnt-out Mercer fall flat. As played by James Woods or Bruce Dern, Mercer could have been interesting. Instead, played straight and without any hint of humour by Snipes, he's merely dull – though he's hardly helped by the fact that the script gives him no memorable lines. By contrast, the relationships between Diamond and Ronnie, and Diamond and his wife are full of sardonic vitality. We constantly ask ourselves who is the most stupid: Diamond for having such hopeless delusions of grandeur or Ronnie for believing him.

Purely on the level of plot, this is a tired and desperately contrived thriller. The tough cop whose dedication to his job has ruined his private life is a limp genre cliché rivalled only by that other formula dimension to Mercer's character: his hunger to avenge his partner's death. However, the film's obvious delight in foregrounding its many bare-faced coincidences is consistently engaging. The casual carelessness of the ending – the title which limply explains what's happened to Vikki and Mercer – is perhaps in keeping with a script which, again and again, trades dramatic credibility in favour of outrageous humour.

Diamond, though, is a genuine comic creation. His nostalgia for old-time dancing might recall such modern noir-influenced thrillers as *Hustle* (Burt Reynolds' taste for old movies and Cole Porter) and *Atlantic City* (Burt Lancaster's dapper clothes), except that he's completely lacking in those characters' introspective depth. Furthermore, he's never made to stand symbolically in the way that they do for the supposed decline of a well-ordered past into the sleazy present. He also lacks that other fundamental trait of the noir hero – an emotional vulnerability to women. In Harris's scheme of things, it seems, the world has always been a sleazy place; women are mostly victims, and the nearest Diamond comes to self-knowledge is his exasperated cry when he's finally arrested: "What's the use, you can't fucking win!"

Dramatically, *Boiling Point* (the title is never satisfactorily explained) is hardly substantial, but it's also consistently entertaining. Harris skips across the surface of his hackneyed story in much the same carefree way as he introduces Diamond in the opening scene. And, at least when Hopper and Viggo Mortensen are on screen, it's difficult not to skip along happily beside him.

Tom Tunney

The Cement Garden

United Kingdom/Germany/France 1992

Director: Andrew Birkin

Certificate

18

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Constantin Film

In association with

Torii Productions/

Sylvia Montalti/

Laurentic Film

Productions

Made with the

participation of the

European

Co-production Fund

(UK) Ltd/Bayerische

Landesanstalt für

Aufbaufinanzierung/

ZDF/Canal Plus

Executive Producers

Bernd Eichinger

Martin Moszkowicz

Producers

Bee Gilbert

Ene Vanaveski

Co-producer

Steve O'Rourke

Production Associate

Daniela Edelburg

Production Supervisor

Norbert Preuss

Production Co-ordinator

Samantha Hones

Unit Manager

Mike Clark

Location Manager

Mike Clark

Post-production Manager

Stephanie Hormann

Assistant Directors

Martin Harrison

Jeremy Gould

Screenplay

Andrew Birkin

Based on the novel

by Ian McEwan

Director of Photography

Stephen Blackman

In colour

Editor

Toby Tremlett

Associate:

Brian Sinclair (GBFE)

Production Designer

Bernd Lepel

Art Director

Amanda Grenville

Set Dresser

Amanda Grenville

Special Effects

Bob Smoke

Models

Gavin Lindsay

Kenneth Murray

Ieuan Hemlock

Music

Edward Shearmur

Music Performed by

Münchner

Symphoniker

Music Producer

Edward Shearmur

Music Consultant

George Naschke

Songs

"Lady Anne", "Our

Weakening Lives"

by Ben Catford,

Jeff Wilcox, performed

by Colour; "Early

Hours", "Antibes",

"Lady In Blue" by

Steve Martin; "Rhine

River Boat" by Gerhard

Narholz; "Pin Down"

by Stinton, Easton,

performed by Brutus;

"Hand Gun" by Dickie

Lorraine, Justin Travis,

performed by Nervous;

"Dream", "Come To

Me" by Magnus

Hastings, Adrian

Hardy, performed

by Magnus Hastings;

"Poor Little Rich Girl"

by P. Rabiger,

E. Shearmur, S. Monti,

performed by

Jamestown;

"Moonshine" by Martin

G. Jowers, performed

by Mono Pacific;

"Happy Birthday"

by Mildred Hill, Patty

Smith Hill;

"Greensleeves";

"Human Touch" by

P. Rabiger, S. Shearmur,

S. Monti, performed

by Jamestown; "Broken

T.V." by and performed

by Gavin Rossdale;

"Me & J.C." by Dave

Gilmour; "Saturday

Sad" by Martin G.

Jowers, performed by

Mono Pacific

Costume Design

Bernd Lepel

Make-up Artist

Aileen Seaton

Title Design

Sickert

Sound Editor

Andy Kennedy

ADR Editor

Rusty Copleman

(GBFE)

Sound Recordists

Guillaume Sciamia

Music:

Peter Fuchs

Dolby stereo

ADR Recordist

Clive Pendry

Sound Re-recordist

Michael Kranz

Foley Artist

Ted Swanscott

Post-production

Sound Consultant

Max Hoskins

Cast

Andrew Robertson

Jack

Charlotte Gainsbourg

Julie

Alice Coulthard

Sue

Ned Birkin

Tom

Sinead Casack

Mother

Hanns Zischler

Father

Jochen Horst

Derek

Gareth Brown

William

William Hootkins

Commander Hunt's

Voice

Dick Flockhart

Truck Driver

Mike Clark

Driver's Mate

9,479 feet

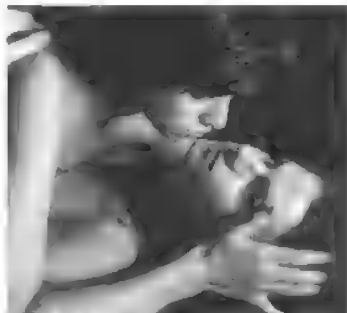
105 minutes

Jack is an unhappy and unkempt adolescent who has an uneasy relationship with his family. His resentment of his father is the focus for his adolescent frustrations. One day, while pouring cement over his weed-infested garden, Jack's father collapses and dies. Soon after, Jack's mother dies and, together with his older sister Julie, he decides to 'bury' his mother in a filing cabinet full of cement in the cellar. Fearful of being taken into care and separated, Jack and Julie take over the running of the house including taking care of their younger siblings, Sue and Tom. Soon Jack is shrinking away from responsibility, refusing to shop, clean or even wash himself. Julie begins a relationship with a property developer, Derek, whose intrusion into the house threatens Jack with the reinstatement of normal values. Derek is shocked to find Tom wearing a wig and a dress and becomes suspicious of the odour in the cellar. Returning unbidden one night he finds Jack and Julie making love and calls the police.

The auteurist critic does not have to look very far to find the thematic core of Andrew Birkin's work. Birkin is interested in youth. He wrote *The Lost Boys* for television and adapted *Peter Pan* for NBC. Now he has written and directed an adaptation of Ian McEwan's first novel, *The Cement Garden*. Being about teenage incest, *The Cement Garden* has taken a long time to get to the big screen; British television was unwilling to finance the film because of its risky subject. Maybe the subject is a risky one, but Birkin is no fast-buck sensationalist. This is a restrained and dignified film, "sensitive to its subject matter, generous in its instincts, emotionally wise and moving", in the words of Ian McEwan himself. All McEwan missed out was the bit about faithful to its source. Aside from a few minor changes in dialogue and the never quite explained transformation of Julie's boyfriend Derek from snooker-playing no-good to Thatcherite property developer, the film is a virtual facsimile of the novel.

Birkin is as interested in the disgusting detail as is McEwan. Early on, we are treated to a close-up of a gob of spitte douching a wall before a cigarette is lazily doused in it. Andrew Robertson, the spitter in question, has a face as pure as Perrier, but the camera likes to linger on the spots it develops when he stops washing.

It lingers on broken bricks and shattered glass too. The film is set in a run-down place, and while watching it I thought it had been made in Germany (it is part German financed). Certainly the house – which Birkin contrives to make look more like a child's drawing of home, with four windows and a door always seen flat on – seems not to be of this country. Birkin isolates it so well that it doesn't feel to be a part of any country; yet the film was shot in the no-man's land of London's Docklands. More properly, we are in no-adults' land. With both parents dead,



Charlotte Gainsbourg and Andrew Robertson

the children inhabit a world where taboos can be broken.

Just as his characters eschew social norms, McEwan eschewed generic conventions in order to prevent his novel from sliding into the Gothic. Indeed, all the Gothic elements are there – the abandoned house, the overbearing patriarch, the dead mother in the cellar. But McEwan's lucid detachment ensured the genre's thematic baggage takes a back seat. The novel may well be an examination of the social construction of gender, but before it is that it is a beautifully written story. Birkin, however, is not so subtle. He makes Julie's speech about repressive dress codes the pivot of the film, clumsily shooting it in a succession of close-ups just to make sure we get the point.

Unlike McEwan, Birkin is too conscious of style to remain an onlooker. There is a lot of wide- and low-angle work here, designed to reinforce the weirdness of what we are watching. Exterior shots are heavily filtered with nacreous pinks and yellows. The interior of the house, all claustrophobic darkness and slats of light, is like something out of a film noir. The dust in the air isn't there just to tell us that the kids don't look after the place; Birkin is in love with the way the dust looks. As with camerawork, so with editing: Birkin pointedly cross-cuts between Jack wanking in the bathroom and his father's grubby death in a mound of wet cement. With its rhythms and rhymes of movement, the sequence looks good, but there is no thematic justification for this montage.

An obsession with form at the expense of content is the mark of a tyro director. Birkin is not a great director yet, but he does have his virtues. The film's closing shot of Jack and Julie in bed together, their bodies gradually suffused with the blue strobe of the police lights, has a quiet dignity. And Birkin clearly has a way with actors. In a film without a bad performance, it seems unfair to single out any one player, but the diffidently surly newcomer Andrew Robertson is a revelation. Blase and self-conscious, his Jack is so accurate a gangly adolescent that he can't even lean arrogantly against a wall without doubting himself. The film's best moment is when Jack, after his mother's death, lazily wipes a piece of toast across a slab of butter. It is a devastating detail all the better for not being lingered upon. In it one senses the seeds of a film-maker not in thrall to stylistics.

Christopher Bray

The Dark Half

USA 1991

Director: George A. Romero

Certificates

18

Distributor

Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Orion Pictures

Executive Producer

George A. Romero

Producer

Declan Baldwin
Associate Producer
Christine Romero

Production Supervisor

Janice F. Sperling

Production Co-ordinator

Ann Ruark

Unit Production Manager

Declan Baldwin

Location Supervisor

Scott Hornbacher

Post-production

Co-ordinator
C. Cory M.

McCrumb-Abdo

2nd Unit Director

Tom Dubensky

Costing

Terry Liebling

Voice

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

Nicholas C. Mastandrea

Drew Rosenberg

Screenplay

George A. Romero

Based on the book
by Stephen King

Director of Photography

Tony Pierce-Roberts

In colour

2nd Unit Directors

of Photography
Robert Wagner

Mike Spiller

Camera Operators

Michael Levine

Additional:
Michael Spiller

2nd Unit:
Jeff Tufano

Steadicam Operator

Kyle Rudolph

Video Image

Rhonda C. Gunner

Richard E. Hollander

Gregory L. McMurry

John C. Walsh

John Des Jardin

Antoine Durr

Joseph Goldstone

Andy Kopra

Larry Mallone

Glenn Neufeld

Craig Reynolds

Larry Weiss

Visual Effects

VCE:

Producer:
Peter Kuran

Supervisor:
Kevin Kutchaver

Production
Co-ordinator:
Marilyn Nave

Optical Effects:
David Emerson

George Lockwood

Todd Hall

Gary Martin

Brian Griffin

Animation Effects:
Pam Vick

Al Magliocchetti

Mark Myer

FX Photography:
Paul Gentry

William Conner

Gary George

Miniatures:
James Belohoevek

Computer Generated
Brids/Computer

Composited Effects
Video Image

Opticals
Zilla Clinton

Animatronics

Ken Walker

Tom Culnan

Special Effects

Bird Mechanicals

Larry O'Dien

Motion Control Operator

Paul Gentry

Editor

Pasquale Buba

Production Designer

Clerus Anderson

Art Director

Jim Feng

Art Department

Co-ordinator
Andrew Sands

Set Decorator

Brian Stonestreet

Set Dressers

Lead:
Greg Jones

Sonja Roth

Beth Rubino

Daniel Fisher

Additional:
Jon Morrison

Megan Graham

Maurin Scarlatta

Mia Bocella

Ralph Pivrotto

Jane Hyland

Barbara Thompson

Draftsman

David Eckert

Scenics

Charge:
Eileen Garrigan

Standby:
Paula Payne

Storyboard Artists

Peter Von Sholly

Special Effects:

Rick Catizone

Special Effects

Projects Supervisor
Zilla Clinton

Special Effects Supervisor

Carl Horner Jr

Special Effects Consultant

Ed Fountain

Special Effects

Fabricators:
Kristina Horner

Gary Kosko

Rick Catizone

Special Effects

Breakaway Supervisor
Keith Brzozowski

Special Effects Sculptor

Matt Vogel

Music

Christopher Young

Music Performed by

Synthesizers:
Mark Zimoski

Munich Symphony
Orchestra

Orchestrations

Christopher Young

Jeff Atmajian

Music Editor

John Lasalandra

Songs

"Are You Lonesome
Tonight" by Roy Turk,

Lou Handman,

performed by
Elvis Presley

Costume Design

Barbara Anderson

Wardrobe Supervisor

Nancy Palmatis

Make-up Artists

Key:
Jeanne Josefczyk

Additional:
Carol Paulick

Make-up Effects

John Vulich

Everett Burrell

Title Design

Neal Thompson

Opticals

Cinema Research
Corporation

Supervising Sound Editors

Michael Hilkene

Eric W. Lindemann

Sound Editors

Gaston Biraben

Jim Bryan

Robert Fitzgerald

Elliott Koretz

Mark Rathaus

ADR Editor

C.T.W.

ADR Voices

Holly Ryan

Judi Durand

Kevin Goetz

Greg Finley

David Coburn

Joseph Chapman

Steve Alterman

Deborah Sallender

Sound Recordists

Rick Sutton

2nd Unit:
Michael Boyle

Sound Effects:
Ken J. Johnson

Music:
Eric Tomlinson

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Gregory H. Watkins

Carlos De Larios

Bill W. Benton

Sound Effects Co-ordinator

Odin Benitez

Foley

Gregg Barbanell

Joan Rowe

Consultants

Medical:
Richard Stypula

Contact Lens:
Doctor Mitchell Cassel

Stunt Co-ordinator

Phil Neilson

Stunts

Jim Thompson

Michael C. Russo

Donald Hewitt

Peter Hoek

Greg Smrz

Cynthia Neilson

Bird Co-ordinator

Mark Harden

Bird Trainers

Mac Embury

Jeff Green

Mark Jackson

Doree Sitterly

Fernando Celis

Roland Rafter

Ursula Brauner

Cast

Timothy Hutton

Thad Beaumont

George Stark

Amy Madigan

Liz Beaumont

Michael Roeker

Alan Pangborn

Jolie Harris

Reggie Delesseps

Robert Joy

Fred Clawson

Monty Brannstrom

Mike Donaldson

Best Grant

Shayla Beaumont

Rolando Alda

Miriam Cowley

Patrick Brennan

Young Thad Beaumont

Larry John Meyers

Doc Pritchard

Christina Romero

Little Girl

C.T.W.

Robin Thomas

Doctor Albertson

Molly Renfro

Hilary

Judy Graft

Head Nurse

John Machione

Male Nurse

Erik Jensen

Male Student

Tom Mardrosian

Rick Cowley

Glenn Colerider

Homer Gamache

Christine Forrest

Trudy Wiggins

Royal Dano

Digger Holt

Nardi Novak

Pangborn's

Receptionist

Zachery (Bill) Muir

Norris Ridgewick

William Cameron

Officer Hamilton

David Butler

Carl De Bor

Troopers

Orlando Lohmelo

Dodie

Lamont Arnold

Lee Hayes

New York City Cops

John Panzlo

Todd Pangborn

◀ separate existence has been dispensed with, the new-born entity contents himself with the simplistic-monster business of slaughtering a succession of marginal characters before the final confrontation.

Romero's careful adaptation of an unwieldy tome tries hard to correct King's slapdash plotting, but is ultimately yoked to the novel's trite story and unable to articulate the more intriguing issues raised. Far less effective than his concise *Monkey Shines*, *The Dark Half* finds Romero away from his usual concerns (although he works in the horror genre, Romero's films prefer science fiction to the supernatural) and doing his best to embody another man's ideas. That Romero remains one of the most underrated craftsmen in genre cinema is proved yet again by the way he almost pulls off much of King's silliness. Stuck with an absurd finale, Romero carefully works in the eerie sparrows as a recurring theme from the first sequence, almost but not quite justifying the avian *deus ex machina* with the ominous build-up.

The film's major success is in the area of characterisation, with Hutton delivering complementary performances almost on a level of Jeremy Irons in *Dead Ringers*. There is a scripted confusion about the villain, who never decides whether he is a pseudonym come to life, the ghost of a dead twin, or another incarnation of that malignant Elvis currently stalking American popular culture. Evoked by a snatch of "Are You Lonesome Tonight", and with pointy boots, ominous quiff and Mississippi accent, Hutton's Stark is a potent monster, with his polite threats and razor slashes. But he never remotely suggests a writer, and sadly disappears under open-sore make-up as the plot falls apart around him.

There are frightening early hints - Thad lovingly explains to his toddler that he'd like to cut off Clawson's penis and shove it down his throat - that the monster is not entirely externalised. But when he learns that Stark has done exactly this to the creep, he is properly horrified and our sympathies are restored. Amy Madigan, heroically making something of a thankless role, indicates that she has always known about the dangers of letting Stark loose. However, the film, in tidying up King's confusion about where Stark comes from, tends to exonerate Thad by making the villain an 'other' rather than a manifestation of the writer's unhealthy impulses. The abrupt cut-off after Stark has been pecked apart robs the film of King's downbeat conclusion - that the marriage will be unable to survive Liz's realisation that the monster is as much a part of Thad's personality as the gentle father.

The film's 'happy' ending is oddly unsatisfying. On the evidence given about both men's books, it's hard not to go along with their agent's claim: "I read George Stark because it's fun, but I read Thad Beaumont because it's my job." Without Stark, one fears for the future career and sanity of Thad.

Kim Newman

Dave

USA 1993

Director: Ivan Reitman

Certificates

12

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

Executive Producers

Joe Medjuck

Michael C. Gross

Producers

Lauren Shuler-Donner

Ivan Reitman

Associate Producers

Gordon Webb

Sherry Fately

Unit Production Manager

Gordon Webb

Location Managers

Michael Burmeister

Brian Haynes

2nd Unit

Peggy Pridemore

2nd Unit Director

Michael C. Gross

Costing

Michael Chinich

Bonnie Timmermann

Associate

Alan Berger

Assistant Directors

Peter Giuliano

Kate Davey

Rebecca Strickland

Robert Webb

Screenplay

Gary Ross

Director of Photography

Adam Greenberg

In colour

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Peter Norman

Matte Photography

Wally Schaab

Aerial Photography

James Gavin

Camera Operators

Bill Roe

2nd

William Barber

2nd Unit

Cary Fisher

Steadicam Operator

Liz Ziegler

Video Playback

Paul Murphy

Visual Effects

Buena Vista

Visual Effects Supervisor

Harrison Ellenshaw

Producer

Lynda Lemon

Line-up

Winston Quitasol

Optical Supervisor

Kevin Koneval

Matte Painting Supervisor

Paul Lasaine

Editor

Sheldon Kahn

Production Designer

J. Michael Riva

Art Director

David Klassen

Set Design

Joseph Pacelli Jr

John Dexter

Darrell Wight

Steve Arnold

Set Decorator

Michael Taylor

Special Effects

David M. Blittstein

Music

James Newton Howard

Music Director

Marty Paich

Orchestrations

Brad Dechter

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Songs

"Don't" by Jerry Leiber.

Mike Stoller,

performed by Elvis

Presley; "Oklahoma"

by Richard Rodgers.

Oscar Hammerstein II;

"Tomorrow" by Charles

Strouse, Martin

Charmin; "Louie Louie"

by Richard Berry

Costume Design

Richard Hornung

Ann Roth

Costume Supervisor

Jim Tyson

Make-up Artists

Ron Berkeley

Linda DeVetta

Richmond

Robert Norin

Titles/Options

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert Grieve

Sound Editors

Alison Fisher

John Artufat

Allen Hartz

George Anderson

Linda Whitlesey

Supervising ADR Editor

Jessica Gallavan

ADR Editors

Dick Friedman

Avram Gold

Joe Dorn

Foley Supervisor

John Murray

Foley Editors

Michael Dressel

Jonathan Klein

Sound Recordists

Gene Cantamessa

Music

Shawn Murphy

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Gary Bourgeois

Anna Behlmer

Sound Effects Editors

Stu Bernstein

David Giammarco

Steve Mann

White House

Technical Advisor

Phil Wise

Cast

Kevin Kline

Dave Kovic/Bill Mitchell

Sigourney Weaver

Ellen Mitchell

Frank Langella

Bob Alexander

Kevin Dunn

Alan Reed

Ving Rhames

Duane Stevenson

Ben Kingsley

Vice-President Nance

Charles Grodin

Murray Blum

Faith Prince

Alice

Laura Linney

Randi

Bonnie Hunt

White House Tour

Guide

Parley Beer

Senate Majority Leader

Stefan Gierasch

House Majority Leader

Anna Devore Smith

Mrs Travis

Charles Hallahan

Policeman

Tom Dugan

Jerry

Alba Onis

Lola

Steve Witting

Secret Service

Kellen Sampson

David

Luzie Bligham

White House Guard

Frederic W. Barnes
Ronald Brownstein
Eleanor Clift
Senator Christopher Dodd
Senator Tom Harkin
Bernard Kalb
Larry King
Michael Kinsley
Morton Kondracke
Jay Leno
Frank Mankiewicz
Christopher Matthews
John McLaughlin
Senator Howard
Melmanham
Justice Abner J. Mikva
Robert D. Novak
Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill
Richard Reeves
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Senator Paul Simon
Senator Alan Simpson
Ben Stiehl
Oliver Stone
Kathleen Sullivan
Jeff Tachett
Helen Thomas
Mina Tannenbaum
Sander Vanocur
John Yang
As Themselves
Stephen Root
Don Durenberger
Catherine Reitman
Girl at Durenberger's
Dawn Arneson
Mother at
Durenberger's
Marianna Harris
Clara
Sarah Marshall
Diane
Ralph Maczo
White House Barber
George Martin
President's Physician

Laurel Frank
White House Nurse
Tom Kurlander
Trauma Doctor
Dendrie Taylor
Trauma Nurse
Joe Kuroda
Japanese Prime
Minister
Governor Robert
Vice-President's Wife
Joan Rollman
Vice-President's Son
Ruth Goldway
Secretary of Education
Frank Birney
Director of OMB
Paul Collins
Secretary of Treasury
Peter White
Secretary of Commerce
Robin Gammell
Postmaster General
Weather Newton
Judy
Gary Ross
Policeman
Jeff Joseph
Ellen's Aide
Bernie Bartlett
Female Senator
Robert K. Walsh
Speaker of the House
William Pitts
Congressional
Doorkeeper
Dan Butler
Reporter
Wendy Gordon
Sen Patrick Johnson
Steve Kneoth
Announcers

9,875 feet
110 minutes

Dave Kovic, who runs a small employment agency in Baltimore, bears an uncanny resemblance to the President of the United States, whom he impersonates occasionally for laughs at local fund-raising events. When President Mitchell needs a stand-in while he enjoys an assignment with Randi, one of his secretaries, Dave finds himself recruited to make a brief appearance as 'President' at a massive reception. His impersonation is suddenly extended when Mitchell has a stroke in Randi's arms, and his Chief of Staff, Bob Alexander, seizes the opportunity to further a scheme to discredit the Vice-President and put himself in line for the presidency. Dave is carefully coached by Alexander and his reluctant accomplice, Communications Director Alan Reed, to continue a hoax that will fool the White House executives, the media, and even the First Lady, Ellen, who despises her husband. Nervously accepting the role as an opportunity to serve his country, Dave settles into the routine of presidential duties and by sheer innocence and warmth of character begins to transform the Mitchell image.

Noting his new-found concern about the plight of the homeless, Ellen begins a fresh appraisal of her 'husband' - until Alexander's dismissal of a funding project convinces her that the President is still resorting to his usual trickery. Confronted by her, Dave starts to question the actions being taken by Alexander supposedly on his behalf. Alexander tells him that \$650 million has to be cut from the federal budget, and Dave calls on his friend, accountant Murray Blum, to help him understand government finances. Together

they examine the figures, and to Alexander's astonishment Dave steers his next cabinet meeting through a number of budget revisions which enable him to reinstate the welfare programme. Ellen tricks Dave into revealing that he is an impostor and demands to see her husband; they visit the vault where Mitchell lies on a life-support system. Unwilling to partner a fake President, Ellen prepares to leave the White House but relents after an evening of discussion with Dave about what the Presidency might yet achieve.

Dave summons a press conference, and fires Alexander when he tries to intervene; the President's announcement that employment will be found for every American provides a major topic for the startled media. Returning from the overseas tour that has kept him out of circulation, Vice-President Nance refutes the allegations initiated against him by Alexander, and when Dave checks with the repentant Reed he learns that it was indeed Mitchell, not Nance, who was guilty of malpractice. Alexander announces at a news conference that the President is implicated in scandal, and Dave responds by admitting to a shared guilt with Alexander. The President then collapses from another apparent stroke, and Dave returns to his employment agency while Mitchell is buried and Nance is sworn in as his successor. As Dave's friends begin to campaign for his entry into politics, Ellen turns up in Baltimore to give him her loving support.

Gary Ross's king-for-a-day fantasy would seem a rewarding topic for a screenwriter with an active political background (a Kennedy and Dukakis supporter, Ross has composed a host of campaign speeches). There are moments when Dave seems poised in readiness to remind us of the simple humanitarian truths, formerly articulated by Mr Smith and Mr Deeds, by which a government might inspire its people. But the mood proves to be comical with only the slightest of allegorical veneers, and the opportunities are allowed to slip away. In the end, national management is restored to the grip of the professionals (many of whom play themselves in the film, doubtless to the enthusiasm of their electorate) while the silver-tongued newcomer, having proved little more than the possibility of bluffing one's way into anything, is returned to the bottom of the ladder to attempt a more conventional ascent. By reinforcing the popular belief that government is largely in the hands of incompetents (such as its own hero), Dave stays ingratiatingly subversive. It is much easier after all - as Norman Lamont may have noticed - to raise a laugh by observing, "If I ran my business this way I'd be out of business" than to balance the books while staying in office.

Ross's screenplay for *Big* similarly plunged an innocent into a role of perplexing sophistication, allowed him a brief triumph based on disruptive non-conformism, and extracted him when



Kevin Kline and the cut outs

the going began to get rough. Inexplicable magic (*Big*) and outrageous coincidence (*Dave*) are cynically employed to point the stories where Ross wants them to go: both offer a split personality theme, man and child in the same body, a struggle for accelerated maturity in an environment of suddenly major issues. The awkward reward in each case is the love of a mature woman, an eventuality which leaves *Big* in disastrous confusion, but which makes marginally better sense in *Dave* if no questions are asked about the hero's pre-Presidential career (what, no ties?) or, for that matter, about the tastes of the First Lady. Strikingly, both films conclude with the feel-good premise that it is in the natural order of things to work out for the best. Otherwise, the only cause they promote is that of discomfiture: there is scarcely a character in either one who is not required at some point to pop the eyes and drop the jaw.

Dave makes comfortable material for Ivan Reitman, whose comedies are a catalogue of double-takes and disruptive innocents (Murray in *Stripes*, Schwarzenegger in *Twins*, practically everybody in *Ghostbusters*). The film has been unobtrusively put together with a lot of close-ups and a minimum of effects. There's a cunning moment when the President confronts his double for the first time, the camera movement 'proving' that it's incontrovertibly the same actor twice over; but the style is mostly formal rather than flashy, some rather obvious backdrops augmenting a generally plausible White House. The director's trademark – a soundtrack noisily compiled from rough-hewn chunks of orchestration – here gets a Spielbergian top-dressing of romantic strings.

But the play's the thing: always generous to his cast, Reitman finds a perfect villainy in the troubled eyes of Frank Langella, who splendidly emotes a Svengali influence until forced by the script into lugubrious dementia. And the whole adventure is carried shoulder high by the performances of Sigourney Weaver and Kevin Kline, their subtlety steering the narrative through most of its translucent moments. Both Ross and Reitman share an interest in stories of partnership (the Rushton-Hanks alliance in *Big* becomes the Grodin-Kline unit in *Dave*, in turn a variation on the ill-matched duo of *Twins*), and *Dave* is a highly polished and evasively untroubling illustration that they have every reason to celebrate the benefits of teamwork.

Philip Strick

La Fille de l'air

France 1992

Director: Maroun Bagdadi

Certificate

15
Distributor: Metro Tartan
Production Company: CIBY 2000/TFI Films
With the participation of Investimage 4/ Canal Plus

Executive Producer

Jean-Claude Fleury

Line Producer

Farid Chaouche

Production Co-ordinator

Daniela Romano

Location Managers

Sylvestre Guarino

Lays Cappatti

Casting

Gérard Moulevrier

Assistant Directors

Patrick Delabrière

Cécile Maistre

Christophe Barbier

Screenplay

Florence Quentin

Maroun Bagdadi

Inspired by the book

Fille de l'air by

Nadine Vaujour

Dialogue

Florence Quentin

Director of Photography

Thierry Arbogast

In colour

Aerial Photography

Charlet Recors

Steadicam Operators

Marc Koninckx

Jacques Monge

Editor

Luc Barnier

Art Director

Michel Vandestien

Special Effects

Jean-Marc Mouligne

Jacques Puisseux

Jean-Claude Benzazon

Music

Gabriel Yared

Music Performed by

Drums/Percussion:

Pierre-Alain Dahan

Congas/Bongos:

Orlando Polleo

Flutes:

Bruno Ribera

Saxophone/Clarinet:

Jean-Louis Chautemps

Piano:

Maurice Vander

Songs

"L'italiano" by

S. Cutugno.

C. Minellano,

performed by

Toto Cutugno;

"Avalon" by Bryan

Ferry, performed

by Roxi Music;

"Karma Chameleon"

by O'Dowd, Moss,

Craig, Hay, Pickett,

performed by

Culture Club

Costume Design

Cécile Balme

Wardrobe Supervisor

Germaine Ribet

Make-up

Supervisor:

Michel Dervelle

Magali Ceyrat

Special Make-up Effects

Dominique Colladant

Sound Editor

Jacqueline Mariani

Sound Recordists

Jean-Pierre Duret

Stéphanie Granel

François Groult

Annabel Callard

Pascal Vuillemin

Eric Saintard

Music:

Didier Liz

Dolby stereo

Foley Recordist

Gilles Missir

Consultant:

Francis Perréard

Sound Re-recordists

Bruno Tarrrière

Eric Bonnard

Eric Ferret

Jean-Louis Le Bras

Foley Artist

Pascal Chauvin

Animal Consultant

André Noel

Equestrian Advisor

François Nadal

Police Sequence Advisor

Georges Perrin

Stunt Co-ordinators

Daniel Vérité

Gilles Conseil

Helicopter Stunts

Yann Le Bouar

Stunts

Roland Neunreuther

Michel Anderson

Bernard Chevreul

Jean-Pierre Suchet

Alain Saugout

Patrick Steltzer

Alain Guérillot

Gérard Kuhn

Philippe Neunreuther

Carole Vérité

Lionel Vitrant

Patrick Pittavino

Equestrian:

Fabrice Nadal

Helicopter Pilots

Yann Le Bouar

Jean-Marie Le Goff

Subtitles

Ian Burley

Kay Bourguine

Cast

Béatrice Dalle

Brigitte

Thierry Fortmeun

Daniel

Hippolyte Girardot

Philippe

Roland Bertin

Maitre Lefort

Jean-Claude Dreyfus

Marcel

Jean-Paul Roussillon

Raymond

Catherine Jacob

Rose

Liliane Rovère

Mother

Louise-Lauro Mariani

Cécile

Arnaud Chévrier

Mick

Elisabeth Macocco

Chief Supervisor:

Isabelle Candelier

Jacqueline

Farida Rahouadj

Philidar

Marina Golovine

Caro

Mina Pavlovic

Selina

Catherine Bidaut

Nicole

Gilles Gaston-Dreyfus

Agency Manager

Dolphine Rich

Brigitte's Examining

Magistrate

Rachel Salik

Daniel's Examining

Magistrate

Maurice Bernart

Superintendent

Foued Nassah

Policeman

Yann Le Bouar

Helicopter Instructor

Jean-Marc Roulet

Mayor's Assistant

Martine Gautier

Prison Warden

Pierre-Alain Chapuis

Supermarket

Policeman

Patrick Arrigac

Antoine

Monique Couturier

Nun

André Chassemeaux

Magistrate

Alice Bardet

Michel Beaudard

Jean-Yves Blateau

Richard Boulet-Despales

Edouard Bouzy

Christine Brotons

Jean Clément

Marie-Dominique Dessez

Bonnie Gamard

Djemil Gayres

Myriam Gharbi

Cécile Heller

Annie Jourzler

David Katz

Rodolphe Katz

Thierry Lanjerek

Bernard Martiel

Nabil Messadi

Dolphine Quentin

Mario José Segaria

Morgane Sigrid

Bernard Tachl

Tann Chaouche

9,587 feet

107 minutes

Subtitles

Brigitte Roubiot lives in the country with her lover, ex-convict Daniel Barnier, by whom she's pregnant, and her young daughter Céline, from a previous marriage. Planning to open a riding stables, they drive to Paris where Daniel goes off to raise money while Brigitte waits with Céline at her mother's house. A brutal police raid on the house yields guns and stolen cash; Daniel has been captured during a supermarket heist in which a policeman was shot dead.

Both Daniel and Brigitte are jailed, and their daughter Isabelle is born in prison. At Brigitte's insistence, they get married, and she is subsequently released on compassionate grounds. But Daniel, thanks to persistent escape attempts, faces the prospect of 36 years in jail. Brigitte's adored brother Philippe, another ex-con who introduced her to Daniel, returns home and they plot ways of freeing Daniel.

Daniel puts Brigitte in touch with Micky, his accomplice on the supermarket job, who got away. Micky agrees to help Daniel escape, but before he can do so he's killed during a heist. Clearing his flat of incriminating evidence, Brigitte finds a stash of banknotes and a flying magazine; she starts lessons to become a helicopter pilot. When money runs short, she raises more from crime boss Raymond.

Philippe pulls a hold-up with Raymond's son Antoine, but both are killed. Daniel, increasingly desperate in jail, makes another escape bid and is given a further sentence. Brigitte recruits an accomplice, Marcel, to help her lift Daniel by helicopter from his Paris jail. Their first attempt is abortive, but the second try, better organised, succeeds and Daniel is hoisted out to the cheers of his fellow-cons. The couple land on a nearby university campus and make their getaway, only to be recaptured four months later.

Maroun Bagdadi is evidently engaged by themes of incarceration endured and surmounted. His previous film *Hors la vie* (based, like this one, on a true story) concerned a French photographer kidnapped in Beirut and held for nearly a year, and allowed Bagdadi to home in on the claustrophobic, hypercharged relationship between the prisoner and his

Lebanese captors. His new film, though, takes place mostly outside the jail, tracing the stubborn determination of a woman to free her imprisoned husband. Perhaps inevitably, this makes for a looser, more diffuse narrative focus – and a growing confusion in the film's moral stance.

The strength of *Hors la vie* was Bagdadi's skill, as a Franco-Arab filmmaker, in eliciting our sympathy for captive and captors alike – there was no sentimentalising, no easy heroes or villains. At first, *La Fille de l'air* looks like pulling off the same trick. A police raid on a houseful of women, children and animals is staged with shocking impact, arousing our indignation at its gratuitous violence. But a moment later we see similar violence – again, perpetrated by men largely on women in the supermarket raid carried out by Brigitte's lover Daniel and his accomplice. Law enforcement and crime are mirror images, each abetting the other in a spiral of (male) aggression.

Something of the same pattern holds good through the early prison scenes, and again after Brigitte's release. The moments of grace are hers – the joyful welcoming-back by her fellow prisoners after the wedding, the ecstatic reunion with her daughters while Daniel's lot is sterile, sullen, increasingly self-mutilating endurance. During the prison episodes, in fact, the male/female contrast risks becoming schematic: all the female warders are shown as kind and supportive, while in the men's wing the masked guards march robotically about.

From here on, the balance of our sympathies is steadily nudged one way. The nurturing ethos of Brigitte's domestic life with her mother and daughters extends to take in the criminal fraternity in which she moves. These are likeable, essentially family-minded crooks, doing no real harm to anyone but themselves (barring the occasional anonymous, expendable policeman). The local crime boss holds court at his crowded and unpretentious dining table: "I take my cheese seriously," he tells Brigitte before giving her his blessing and a wad of notes. She does, it's true, experience a brief spasm of revolt at these cosy conventions – "You killed my brother and I killed him!" she screams at the boss's mistress – but it doesn't last.

By the time we reach the climactic helicopter rescue scene, the film is into Rambo territory, with cheering cons intercut with shots of black-clad warders thundering impotently along walkways. After this, even the final title, noting the couple's recapture four months later, can do little to undercut the romantic affluat of their hand-in-hand escape (shades of *The Graduate*) across the campus lawn: no question now who we're meant to be rooting for. *La Fille de l'air* was scripted by Florence Quentin, writer of Etienne Chatiliez's *Life is a Long Quiet River* and *Tatie Danielle*. A touch of those films' sceptical asstringency would have been more than welcome here.

Philip Kemp

Hard Target

USA 1993

Director: John Woo

Certificate
18

Distributor
UIP

Production Companies
Alphaville/Renaissance

Executive Producers
Moshe Diamant
Sam Raimi
Robert Tapert

Producers
James Jacks
Sean Daniel

Co-producers
Chuck Pfarrer
Terence Chang

Line Producer
Daryl Kass

Associate Producer
Eugene Van Varenberg

Production Supervisor
Patricia Serafini
Madiedo

Production Co-ordinator
Michelle L. Schluter

Unit Production Manager
Daryl Kass

Location Manager
Gerrit Folsom

Post-production Supervisor
Doreen A. Dixon

2nd Unit Director
Billy Burton

Casting
Louisiana:
Rick Landry

Assistant Directors
Dennis Maguire
John E. Gallagher
Nancy Blewer-Mahaffey

Screenplay
Chuck Pfarrer

Director of Photography
Russell Carpenter

Colour
DeLuxe

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Billy Bragg

Aerial Director of Photography
Frank Holgate

Camera Operators
Michael St. Hilaire
Peter Krause

Steadicam Operators
Randy Nolen
Jeff Mart

Optical Effects Supervisor
Joseph Armand Fedele

Editor
Bob Murawski

Production Designer
Phil Dagort

Art Director
Philip Messina

Art Department Co-ordinator
Kelly Curley

Set Decorator
Michele Poulik

Set Dressers
Michael Martin

Key:
David Schlesinger

Draughtspersons
Barbara Ann Jaekel
Monroe Kelly

Scenic Artists
Lead:
David Kelsey
On-set:
Stuart Auld
Lawrence V. Spurlock

Storyboard Artist
Doug Lefler

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Dale Martin

Special Effects
Joe Quinlivan
Leo Solas
Dean Brown
Dale Jones
Gary Jones
Blumes Tracy

Music
Graeme Revell

Music Extracts
"Opus 57 Appassionata Sonata" by Ludwig Van Beethoven, performed by Doctor John Murphy

Music Performed by
Kodo

Orchestrations
Tim Simonec
Graeme Revell

Additional:
Larry Kenton
Ken Kugler

Music Editor
Dick Bernstein

Songs
"Born on the Bayou" by John C. Fogerty, performed by Creedence Clearwater Revival; "Won't You Let Me Go" by Stanley Dural Jr.; "Hey Good Looking" by Hank Williams, performed by Buckwheat Zydeco

Costume Design
Karyn Wagner

Wardrobe Supervisor
Marisa Abowitz

Make-up
Anne Hieronymus
Jean-Claude Van Damme:
Zoltan

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors
John Dunn
George Simpson

Dialogue Editor
David A. Whittaker

Sound Editors
Ron Bartlett
Donald Flick
Lou Kleinman
Elliott Koretz
Geoffrey Rubay

Supervising ADR Editor
Curt Schulkey

ADR Editor
Cliff Latimer

Foley Editor
Mary R. Smith

Sound Recordists
Al Rizzo
Kenny Delbert

Music:
Danny Wallin
Dolby stereo

ADR Recordist
Alan Holly

Foley Recordist
Linda Corbin

Sound Re-recordists
Rick Alexander
Michael C. Casper
Jim Bolt

Foley Artists
Kevin Bartnof
Ellen Heuer

Special Sound Effects
John Pospisil

Stunt Co-ordinator
Billy Burton

Stunts
Mark Stefanich
Tobi Allyn
Pete Antico
John Borland
Chris Branham
Jophery Brown
Heather Burton
William H. Burton
Tony Cecece
Gil Combs
Richard Epper
Dane Farwell
Randy Hall
Dick Hancock
Clifford Happy
Harry Harris
John Hateley
Tom Huff
Henry Kingi Jr.
Ed Mathews

Vinita McClennon
Bill McIntosh
Frank Orsatti
Daniel R. Owen
Steve Percerni
Joe Quinlivan
Glynn Rubin
Blumes J. Tracy
Rudy Ugland
Ric Waugh

Armourer
Steven B. Melton

Snake Wranglers
Jules Sylvester
Jim Brockett

Helicopter Pilots
Craig Hosking
Cliff Fleming

Cost
Jean-Claude Van Damme
Chance Boudreaux
Lance Henriksen
Fouchon
Yancy Butler
Natalia Binder
Arnold Vosloo
Van Cleef

Kasi Lemmons
Carmine

Willford Brimley
Dovee

Chuck Pfarrer
Binder

Bob Apisa
Mr Lopacki

Lenore Banks
Marie

Douglas Forsythe Rye
Frick

Michael D. Leinert
Frack
Willie Carpenter
Elijah Roper
Barbara Tasker
Waitress
Randy Chermie
Shop Steward
Elliott Keener
Randal Poe
Robert Pavlovich
Police Detective
Marco St John
Doctor Morton
Joe Warfield
Ismal Zenan
Jeannette Kontomitrass
Madam
Ted Raimi
Man on the Street
Sven Thorsen
Stephan
Tom Lupe
Jerome
Jules Sylvester
Peterson
Dave Elron
Billy Bob

8,707 feet
97 minutes

New Orleans. The wealthy and refined Emil Fouchon runs an exclusive business organising the hunting and killing of men. Aided by South African ex-mercenary Pik van Cleef, he gives his clients access to sophisticated weaponry and a lethal team of armed motorcyclists. The quarry is chosen from ex-Navy men, combatants out of work, down on their luck and without living relatives. These men are procured for them by Randal Poe who uses the cover of his flyposting business to make contact with likely victims. Their latest victim, Binder, is killed with a sophisticated crossbow as he flees. But Randal has slipped up, and shortly afterwards Binder's daughter Natasha arrives in New Orleans looking for her father. When she is attacked by a group of thugs, an out-of-work sailor, Chance Boudreaux, comes to her defence. She offers to pay him to help her find her father. With the help of Roper, another ex-serviceman and a habitue at the mission Natasha's father frequented, his possessions are located. Natasha lodges a missing person's form with Carmine, a woman police officer and soon after she is given the news of the discovery of her father's body, identified by dental records and service dog tag. Leaflets among Binder's possessions lead Chance and Natasha to Randal Poe, and a visit to the scene of the fire leads Chance to the discovery of a dog tag matching the one in the police's possession - this one bearing marks suggesting a shooting. Carmine orders an autopsy.

Pik meanwhile punishes Randal, slicing off one of his ears. Morton, a police doctor who has been helping Fouchon by faking autopsy results, is shot in the eye by Pik. Randal meanwhile makes contact with Roper, offering him work, but is subsequently killed by Pik. Roper is offered \$100,000

by Fouchon and Pik if he can use his military training to escape an armed pursuer and make his way across the river. Fouchon's new client Zenan is terminally clumsy and is himself shot by Fouchon while Roper, wounded and bleeding, makes his way downtown. There his cries for help go ignored by passers-by and he is finally dispatched in an orgy of gunfire. Carmine herself is later shot, and Chance - with Natasha in tow - himself becomes Fouchon's next quarry.

Chance and Natasha make their way through the bayou to his Uncle Douvee's illicit whiskey still, which they wire with explosives against the imminent arrival of the gang. While Fouchon in a helicopter pursues Chance, who is now on horseback, Douvee and Natasha lie low. The final battle - with Natasha and Douvee taking part - is waged in a vast hangar used to store Mardi Gras costumes; Pik and Fouchon are killed in the onslaught of grenades, heavy weaponry and physical dexterity.

The dream of breaking into the international - meaning American - market has been a potent one for the Hong Kong film industry for the past 30 years. Director John Woo seems better placed than most to realise it. Woo has made the transition from the conventions of a resolutely low-tech martial arts genre - he trained with Shaw Brothers' most impressive martial arts director Chang Cheh, working on two of his best films, *Vengeance* and *Blood Brothers* - to a high-tech one of super stunts and sophisticated weaponry, without losing touch with the gut reality of the physical struggle the genre explores and embodies. But he has also garnered a swathe of plaudits from some of Hollywood's most bankable names, including Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino, who admits Woo's influence on *Reservoir Dogs*, and who is writing a script for him. The current film, however, most noticeably does not have a Tarantino script, but the fact that it is a reworking of Ernest Schoedsack's 1932 film *The Most Dangerous Game* should be some compensation. Schoedsack's way with fairytale, nightmare and myth is not actively antagonistic to Woo's own mix of naive genre and nightmare. The theme of killing for sport and the struggle to resist the extinction of the self is close enough to Woo's previous film *Hard-Boiled* to bode well.

Beneath a thick wrapping of wordless and extended scenes of destructive mayhem, that earlier film contains a meditation on personal and national identity and its loss. It suggests itself as a kind of nightmare about Hong Kong's, and indeed China's, future. Menace is generated not merely from stunt pyrotechnics but also from Woo's Oshima-like awareness of the threat contained in sterile modernist spaces and the fragility of the human body. No favours have been done Woo's thesis by the relative bloodlessness of *Hard Target*. An awareness of physical frailty has been turned into a mere felling of

trees. If vulnerability is of central importance, then the casting of Jean-Claude Van Damme poses problems. Here is an actor of small range, not given to suggesting self-doubt, and his presence in the lead ensures that the kind of drama that can be enacted is strictly in the Superman vein. When someone reassures Natasha that "he'll be all right", we know he will - hence the array of daring stunts involving motorbikes, cars and trains, all travelling at full speed.

This leaves only the two villains Fouchon and Pik as bearers of self-doubt and vulnerability, marginalised by the script, but at once more interesting in themselves and in their relationship with each other than the protagonist. Arnold Vosloo gives a suggestive account of Pik, the killer proud of his professionalism, although he is not called upon to question his beliefs as the villain of *Hard-Boiled* is. It is only in the closing moments that Lance Henriksen, distraught as he closes the eyes of his dead friend amid the chaos, is able to suggest very much beyond an aesthete of violence given to pounding through Beethoven's *Appassionata* at his grand piano.

Hard-Boiled's seamless and impressive merging of the personal and the national finds no coherent development here. Instead the script takes pains to point out the un-American-ness of the two villains, rootless and cosmopolitan, who make plans to ship out of New Orleans for some of the world's more notorious trouble spots. What price then Henriksen's frequently uncanny resemblance to a recent American president and the fact that he is shown to live in a very white house indeed? But traces of a harsher moral critique do remain in places, in a sequence filmed amid the squalor of St Louis' homeless, and in the facile use by Fouchon of the language of democratic choice and market economics to mask his own and others' corruption. He is, he argues, only extending to civilians options open to the professional soldier.

There are clumsinesses in the dialogue, in the performances, in the scenes involving Uncle Douvee and in the throwaway comic ending. But Woo is a director with something to say and an eye for the poetic and resonant. One has to admire the daring stunt work and the intense bravura of the opening sequence, in which a New Orleans street in darkness and rain becomes as threatening and insubstantial as a nightmare. There's also considerable horror in the scene in which the wounded Poe is shunned as he lurches through the brightly lit downtown streets. At this particular point in history, however, we cannot but ask whether the use of ultra-violence in film can still be taken as mere hyperbole; and whether the use of weaponry - however excessive and fetishised - can still be seen as a simple 'empty sign' to be given meaning through the genre in which it occurs or by the auteur who uses it.

Verina Glaessner

Hocus Pocus

Director: Kenny Ortega

US 1993

Certificates

PG
Distributor
Buena Vista
Production Company
Walt Disney
Executive Producer
Ralph Winter
Co-executive Producer
Mick Garriss
Producers
David Kirschner
Steven Haft
Co-producer
Bonnie Bruckheimer
Associate Producer
Jay Heit

Production Co-ordinator
Kathleen M. Courtney
Unit Production Manager
Whitney Green
Location Managers
Debbie Laub
Lori Balton
Post-production Supervisor
Vincent Agostino
Casting
Mary Gail Artz
Barbara Cohen
Associate:
Greg Smith
Voice:
Mick McGowan
Assistant Directors
Ellen H. Schwartz
Bettiann Fishman
Nandi Bowe

Screenplay
Mick Garriss
Neil Cuthbert
Story
David Kirschner
Mick Garriss
Director of Photography
Hiro Narita
Colour
Technicolor
Animation Photography
Brandy Hill
Optical Photography
Kevin Koneval
Ron Peterson
Jim Mann
Motion Control
Photography
Mike Ball
Camera Operators
Kristin R. Glover
B:
Jeff Laszlo
Vista Vision:
Eric Peterson
Visual Effects
Buena Vista
Visual Effects
Executive-in-charge
of Production:
Krystyna Demkowicz
Supervisors:
Peter Montgomery
Craig Barron
Michael Pangrazio
Producer:
Carolyn Soper
Co-ordinator:
Denise Davis
Editor:
Juliette Yager
Special Visual Effects
Matte World
Optical
Supervisor:
Mark Dornfeld
Lineup:
Winston Quitasol
Dennis Dorney
Bill Aylsworth
Digital
Supervisor:
Craig Newman
Scanning:
Bruce Tauscher
Wire Removal:
W.L. Arance
Aaron Campbell
Compositing:
Wally Schaab

Pixar

Tom Hahn
Peter Nye
Michael Shantzis
Matte Artist
Bill Mather
Brian Flora
Animation
Cat Supervisor:
Chris Bailey
Talking Cat:
Rhythm & Hues Inc
Bert Terrier
John Hughes
Larry Weinberg
Dani Colajacomo
Colin Brady
Suponwich Somsaman
Nancy Kato
Rodian Paul
Les Major
Joe Yanuzzi
Meg Freeman
Keith Hunter
David Keller
Will McCown
Supervisor:
Michael Lessa
Effects Animation
James Mansfield
Allen Gonzales
Elissa Bello
Rotoscope Artist
Marsha Gray
Carrington
Ink and Paint
Byron Werner
Judith Bell
Editor
Peter E. Berger
Production Designer
William Sandell
Art Director
Nancy Patton
Set Design
Martha Johnston
Brad Ricker
Set Decorator
Rosemary
Brandenburg
Set Dresser
James Meehan
Illustrator
Giacomo Ghiazza
Visual Effects
Storyboard Artists
James Hegedus
Donna Cline
Doug Lefler
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Terry Frazee
Special Effects
Donald E. Myers Jnr
Geno Crum
Donald Frazee
William Curtis
Donald T. Black
Logan S. Frazee
Louis R. Cooper
Music
John Debney
Orchestrations
Brad Dechter
Don Davis
Frank Bennett
Music Supervisor
Sid James
Music Editor
Nancy Fogarty
Songs
"I Put a Spell On You"
by Jay Hawkins,
performed by (1) Bette
Midler (2) Joe Malone;
"Sarah's Theme" by
James Horner, Brock
Walsh; "Witchcraft"
by Cy Coleman,
Carolyn Leigh,
performed by
Joe Malone; "Sabre
Dance" by George
Wilson; Chants and
Incantations conceived
and by Brock Walsh

Choreography

Peggy Holmes
Kenny Ortega
Costume Design
Mary Vogt
Supervisor:
Pamela Wise
Make-up
Chief:
John M. Elliott Jnr
Artists:
Lee C. Harman
Cheri Minns
Make-up Effects
Bette Midler Old Age:
Kevin Haney
Doug Jones:
Tony Gardner
Alterian Studios
David Penikas
Margaret Prentice
Chet Zar
Vance Hartwell
John Henry Jnr
Bill Sturgeon
John Calpin
Title Design
David Oliver Pfeil
Titles/Opticals
Buena Vista Optical
Supervising Sound Editor
George Watters II
Sound Editors
Marguerite Costin
Howell Gibbens
Suhail F. Kafry
F. Hudson Miller
R.J. Palmer
Supervising ADR Editors
Denise Whiting-Gontz
Denise Horta
Supervising Foley Editor
Victoria Martin
Foley Editors
Matthew Harrison
James Likowski
Sound Recordists
C. Darin Knight
Music:
John Richards
ADR Recordist
Doc Kane
Foley Recordist
David Gertz
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Terry Porter
Mel Metcalfe
David J. Hudson
Special Sound Effects
John Fasal
Foley Artists
James Moriana
Jeffrey Wilhoit
ADR Voices
Chris Allport
Vanna Bonta
Bill Bowles
Bob Cavanaugh
Robert Clotworthy
Jennifer Darling
Burr DeBenning
Debi Derryberry
Mercedes Gan
Patrick Gorman
Ashlee Levitch
Anne Lockhart
Gabriel Luque
Sherry Lynn
Edward Mannix
Andi McAfee
Mick McGowan
Larry Moss
Lindsay Parker
Jan Rabson

Stunt Co-ordinator

Glenn Wilder
Stunts
Carol Neilson
Laura Dash
Christian J. Fletcher
Jennifer Watson-
Johnston
Jimmy N. Roberts
Cecilie Stuart
Michelle Johnston
Karen Getz
Animal Trainers
Gary Gero
Larry Madrid
Stacy M. Basil
Cast
Bette Midler
Winifred
Sarah Jessica Parker
Sarah
Kathy Najimy
Mary
Omri Katz
Max
Thora Birch
Dani
Vinessa Shaw
Allison
Amanda Shepherd
Emily
Larry Bagby III
Ernie ("Ice")
Tobias Jellinek
Jay
Stephanie Faracy
Jenny
Charlie Rocket
Dave
Doug Jones
Billy Butcherson
Karyn Malches
Headless Billy
Butcherson
Sean Murray
Thackery
Jason Marsden
Thackery Binx's Voice
Steve Voboril
Elijah
Norbert Weisser
Thackery's Father
Kathleen Freeman
Miss Olin
D.A. Pawley
Extra Suttan
Firemen
Don Yesso
Bus Driver
Michael McGrady
Cop
Leigh Hamilton
Cop's Girlfriend
Devon Reeves
Little Girl "Near
Broom"
Joseph Malone
Singer
Jordan Redmond
Little Angel
Frank Del Boccio
Lobster Man
Jeff Neubauer
Boy in Class
Toda Bracci
Calamity Jane
Peggy Holmes
Dancer

Cast

Bette Midler
Winifred
Sarah Jessica Parker
Sarah
Kathy Najimy
Mary
Omri Katz
Max
Thora Birch
Dani
Vinessa Shaw
Allison
Amanda Shepherd
Emily
Larry Bagby III
Ernie ("Ice")
Tobias Jellinek
Jay
Stephanie Faracy
Jenny
Charlie Rocket
Dave
Doug Jones
Billy Butcherson
Karyn Malches
Headless Billy
Butcherson
Sean Murray
Thackery
Jason Marsden
Thackery Binx's Voice
Steve Voboril
Elijah
Norbert Weisser
Thackery's Father
Kathleen Freeman
Miss Olin
D.A. Pawley
Extra Suttan
Firemen
Don Yesso
Bus Driver
Michael McGrady
Cop
Leigh Hamilton
Cop's Girlfriend
Devon Reeves
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Broom"
Joseph Malone
Singer
Jordan Redmond
Little Angel
Frank Del Boccio
Lobster Man
Jeff Neubauer
Boy in Class
Toda Bracci
Calamity Jane
Peggy Holmes
Dancer

Trick or treat: Bette Midler and fellow witch



the Sanderson sisters. His little sister Dani demands that he accompany her trick-or-treating while their parents go to a ball. En route, they meet Allison, a girl from Max's class whom he wants to impress. He convinces them to visit the Sanderson sisters' house, now a museum. While there, Max lights the black flame and conjures up the sisters. With the help of Binx the cat, they steal the sisters' spell book and narrowly escape. The sisters fly out to regain the book so that they can steal the life-force from more children and so live forever, but they must do so before sunrise or they'll turn to dust.

In town and at the ball, Max, Dani and Allison try to get help, to no avail. They trap the witches in a kiln at school. Thinking they have burned them up, they rest at Max's house, but the witches snatch Dani and the book and escape to their cottage. Max and Allison trick the witches and regain Dani. In the final showdown at the cemetery, the witches almost succeed in sapping Max's life-force, but the sun comes up in time and they are obliterated. Binx's spirit is set free from his cat body at last to join his sister in heaven.

Max, the sceptical teenage lead of *Hocus Pocus*, cynically observes that "everyone knows" Halloween was invented by candy companies to boost sales. The jade heart might add the film and television industry to the list of conspirators. After Christmas, Halloween - in the States especially - is one of the most commercialised pagan festivals that Christianity has ever adapted to its own purposes. On the consumer shelf along with the toffee apples and fake fangs this All Hallows' Eve, Disney is offering *Hocus Pocus*. For all its machine-tooled edges and plastic moulding, its campy sense of fun sticks like Silly String to a hired costume. Its timing is prescient; not least in terms of release date. After the waning of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, sonic hedgehogs and other contemporary-flavoured icons, children's products are resuscitating favourite demons of the past. After all, if dinosaurs can be raised from the dead, why not witches.

Salem, Massachusetts, Halloween, 1693. Three evil witches, Winifred, Sarah and Mary Sanderson, use a magic spell book to sap the life-force out of little Emily Binx to make them young, and turn her brother Thackery into an immortal black cat. The villagers hang the witches, but they prophesy that should a virgin ever light their black-flamed candle, they will return to life.

Halloween, 300 years later. A teenage boy named Max has just moved to Salem from Los Angeles. He scoffs at Halloween and the legend of

Hocus Pocus should offer a resurrection to the flagging career of Bette Midler, which was badly wounded by the flop *For The Boys* and the missed opportunity of starring in *Sister Act*. Back on divine form here, this star vehicle showcases her real talents for burlesque comedy and lung-straining musical numbers. Her version of Screaming Jay Hawkins' "I Put a Spell on You" doesn't bury the original so much as transform it into a Broadway show-stopper, complete with sister witches Sarah Jessica Parker and Kathy Najimy singing back-up. There are only a few more songs in the film, but it still has a strong musical comedy flavour which will particularly appeal to parents. "Oh no, I think I've left the cauldron on!" cries Bette/Winifred, just as the sisters are about to be hanged. Director Kenny Ortega's background as a choreographer must have been an asset here. Like the film's ball-goers, bewitched to dance all night, he never lets the pace flag.

Inevitably, a film about witchcraft such as this relies heavily on special effects. After a glut of technology-intensive films this summer, *Hocus Pocus* wisely avoids overdoing things. On the evidence of this film, one would think techniques had barely improved since Disney's 1970 witch-flick *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*.

Apart from the expertly animated talking cat, who also reinflates after being run over by a car, it's all pink smoke, routine flying sequences, and highly stylised matte photography. The pantomime artificiality of most of the effects undercut the plot's subtextual menace, which taps children's fear of strangers and abuse.

Conversely, the realism of the unkillable cat appeals to the fantasies of feline lovers of all ages. When Binx seems to be dead at last, the pathos is surprisingly potent. The use of the slushy strains of "Ave Maria" as he ascends to heaven - recalling the final sequence of *Fantasia* - is strangely moving, for all its calculation. Mixing candy corn with just enough creepiness, *Hocus Pocus* delivers more treats than tricks.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey

USA 1993

Director: Duwayne Dunham

Certificate

U

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Walt Disney Pictures

In association with

Touchwood Pacific

Partners I

Executive Producers

Donald W. Ernst

Kirk Wise

Producers

Franklin R. Levy

Jeffrey Chernov

Co-producer

Mack Bing

Production Associate

Suzanne

Wilson-Fellows

Production Co-ordinator

Wanda Mull

Unit Production Managers

Mack Bing

Richard H. Prince

Location Manager

Mark C. Hughes

Castings

Susan Bluestein

Marsh Shoenman

Additional:

Brian Chavanne

Mary Margiotta

Oregon:

Patti Carnes Kalles

Assistant Directors

Scott Cameron

Randy N. Barbee

Screenplay

Caroline Thompson

Linda Wolverton

Based on *The Incredible*

Journey by Sheila

Burnford

Director of Photography

Reed Smoot

Technical

Color

Camera Operator

Brian Sullivan

Editors

Jonathan P. Shaw

Jay Cassidy

Michael Kelly

Brian Berdan

Production Designer

Roger Cain

Art Director

Daniel Self

Set Decorator

Nina Bradford

Special Vocal Effects

Frank Welker

Special Animal Effects

and Make-up

Barry Demeter

Music

Bruce Broughton

Orchestrations

Don Nemitz

Supervising Music Editor

Patricia Carlin

Songs

"Witch Doctor" by Ross

Bagdasarian; "Mission

Impossible Theme"

by Lalo Schiffrin

Costume Design

Karen Patch

Wardrobe Supervisor

Susan L. Bonde

Make-up

Carla Roseto Fabrizi

Titles/Opticals

Buena Vista Optical

Sound Design

Lon Bender

Supervising Sound Editor

David McMoyler

Dialogue Editors

Christopher Assells

Stuart Copley

Lou Kleinman

ADR Editors

Dino Dimuro

Ascher Yates

Foley Editors

Neil Anderson

Peter Lehman

Dan Hegeman

Sound Recordists

Dubbing:

Denis Blackerby

Music:

Armin Steiner

Dolby stereo

Foley Recordist

Sandra Garcia

Marilyn Graf

ADR Recordists

Michael Boudry

Ann Hadsell

Sound Re-recordists

Terry Porter, CAS

Mel Metcalfe

David J. Hudson

Foley:

Mary Jo Lang

Carolyn Tapp

ADR:

Doc Kane

Dean Drabin

Paul Zydell

Sound Effects Editors

Randy Kelley

David Kneupper

Laura Harris

Amy Hoffberg

Foley Artists

John Roesch

Catherine Rowe

Kevin Bartnof

Hilda Hodges

ADR Group

L.A.

Mad Dogs

Newell Alexander

Rosemary Alexander

Mitch Carter

Ike Eisenmann

Donna Lynn Leavy

Lois Maslow

Walter Maslow

Dennis Tufano

Stunt Coordinator

Frank Welker

Animal Coordinator

Joe Camp

Animal Trainer

Jungle Exotics

Steve Martin's Working

Wildlife

Gary Sam Vaughn

Tammy Maples

Cost

Rattler

Chance

Michael J. Fox

Chance's Voice

Tiki

Sassy

Sally Field

Sassy's Voice

Ben

Shadow

Don Ameche

Shadow's Voice

Don Adler

Molly's Father

Ed Bernard

Desk Sergeant

Kevin Chevalle

Jamie

Anne Christianson

Research Assistant

Tom D'Arms

Vet

Woody Emey

Forest Ranger "Mark"

Kim Greist

Laura

Rich Hawkins

Kirk McDonough

Forest Rangers

Robert Hays

Bob

Marmi Huse

Caterer

Jane Jones

Molly's Mother

Veronica Lauren

Hope

David MacIntyre

Footie

Mary Marsh

Laura's Mother

Nick Mastrandrea

Hal

Glenn Mazen

Minister

Mariah Milner

Molly

Janet Penner

Bob's Mother

William Edward Phipps

Quentin

Dorothy Roberts

Peter's Teacher

Frank Roberts

Laura's Dad

Joan Smart

Kate

Virginia Spray

Grace

Gary Taylor

Frank

Mark L. Taylor

Kirkwood

Benj Thall

Peter

Peggy West

Jamie's Teacher

7,585 feet

85 minutes

Chance, an American bulldog, Sassy, a Himalayan cat and Shadow, a golden retriever, belong to three children - Peter, Hope and Jamie - who live with their mother in a ranch house in the Californian mountains. Chance has recently been adopted by the family after being abandoned and impounded. He is mischievous and energetic, baiting Sassy and ignoring the advice of the older and wiser Shadow. The idyll is interrupted when Laura, the children's mother, remarries. Bob, her new husband, has taken a job in the city and the family must leave their home temporarily. The pets are left behind at the mountain ranch of a family friend, Kate. When she leaves for a few days to pasture her animals, Shadow feels that something is wrong and decides that he must find Peter, and so sets off followed by Sassy and Chance.

Shadow leads the two other pets into the mountains. Chance leaps excitedly into this new adventure but when night falls he seeks Shadow's protection from the unfamiliar sounds and conditions. The next day, both dogs rely on the fishing skills of Sassy for their first meal. On a subsequent fishing expedition, Chance chases off two baby bears but is nearly mauled by their enormous parent. At a river crossing, Sassy falls into the current and is swept over a waterfall. When she fails to reappear, the two dogs continue without her and are chased by a lion. Meanwhile, Sassy has been found bedraggled on the banks of the river by a mountain man who takes her back to his cabin and nurses her back to health. The next day, Sassy hears Chance and Shadow barking nearby, and rushes to join them.

Later, Chance encounters a porcupine which sheds several of its quills into the dog's jaws. Hurt but undeterred, Chance carries on and the animals come across a little girl who is lost. They protect her until she is found and the search party recognises the animals from a flyer that Bob has circulated through the county. They are captured and driven to the local pound where they must wait to be collected. The pets fail to understand that they are being rescued and after Chance has been treated they escape back into the mountains. Finally they reach the

ranch, to which the family has now returned and the pets are reunited with their owners. Chance's adventures have taught him about loyalty and friendship and he has learnt to consider the ranch and its occupants as his home and family.

Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey is the way I remember Disney in the 50s when Sunday afternoons around the television consisted of programmes featuring animals and plants in their natural surroundings accompanied by warm, kindly male voice-overs projecting on to the subjects every kind of human thought and desire. Even the Venus fly trap chattered to itself about the juicy flies passing just out of reach while the flies scolded themselves for flying too close to danger.

Homeward Bound moves one step further than these Disney originals, replacing the voice-over with dialogue. It's a daring move because, unlike the animated version, there can be no lip-synch and the first few minutes are distractingly different from other live action feature films, with the dialogue - unrelated to lip movement - being strangely disconnected from the action and the characters. However, with nearly all feature films these days being re-recorded, lip-synch is simply a convention governing the audience's relationship with the screen. It's a relationship which *Homeward Bound* successfully flouts. It helps that the actors turn in good performances; Michael J. Fox is particularly well cast as Chance, injecting just the right puppyish feel into the character and speaking the lines in dog-like yelps with great gusto.

But any sense of innovation is quickly dispelled by a reassuring Disney formula of friendship, loyalty, courage and honour. Set in a mythic version of contemporary America, in which values are simple and wholesome, *Homeward Bound* is irredeemably old-fashioned. Its subtext is Laura's

remarriage and its effect on her eldest child, Peter. He cannot reconcile himself to his mother's new husband and sees his enforced separation from Shadow as Bob's fault. It's an old story about pain, jealousy and fear of loss, with the relationship between Peter and Shadow presented as a metaphor for love, security and trustworthiness. But it's a pure conceit when the reappearance of the pets at the end of the film puts the situation right. Life just isn't like that.

There are echoes of *Bambi* when Sassy disappears over the waterfall, but it doesn't have the same impact as the death of *Bambi's* mother. Neither does the film have the same magical visual qualities or simple directness of the Disney animated oeuvre. Live action emotions are more complicated and opaque, and I doubt whether Chance's personal journey from friendly but rootless pup to mature, home-loving, trustworthy best friend has much moral sticking power for under-tens.

Homeward Bound comes from Sheila Burnford's novel *The Incredible Journey*. Rudyard Kipling tried his hand at a dog subject in his extraordinary novella *Thy Servant a Dog*: "Please may I come in? I am Boots. I am son of Kildonan Brogue - Champion Reserve - V.H.C. - very fine dog; and no-dash-parlour-tricks." At some points in *Homeward Bound* the writers try unsuccessfully for a Boots-style character in Chance. But the pets have an emotional range and a developmental psychology which parallels that of human beings. Kipling's Boots never develops a conceptual apparatus; he learns through behaviour, as dogs do. He will never understand the "kennel-that-moves" (his master's car) but it seems implausible that the infinitely wise Shadow should not understand the telephone. For all this, *Homeward Bound* is a bland but pleasing film for young children, and their parents will marvel at the superbly trained animal stars.

Jill McGreal



Talking Heads: Chance and Shadow on the trail

In the Soup

USA 1992

Director: Alexandre Rockwell

Certificate

15

Distributor

Theatrical Experience

Production Company

Cacous Films

In association with

Will Alliance Company

Ltd (Japan)/Pandora

Films (Germany)/

Why Not Productions

& Odessa Films

(France)/

Alta Films (Spain)/

Mikado Film (Italy)

Executive Producer

Ryuichi Suzuki

Producers

Jim Stark

Hank Blumenthal

Co-executive producers

Chosei Funahara

Junichi Suzuki

Associate Producer

James Schamus

Production Co-ordinator

Michelle A. Dean

Production Manager

Craig Markey

Location Manager

Michael Mailer

Mark Vonholstein

Post-production

Supervisor

Bruce Cooley

Post-production

Consultant

Kathie Hersch

Casting

Walken & Jaffe Casting

Assistant Directors

Mary Beth Hagner

Rob Hallenbake

David Alberico

Screenplay

Alexandre Rockwell

Tim Kissel

Director of Photography

Phil Parmet

Black and white

Additional Photography

Charles Libin

Editor

Dana Congdon

Production Designer

Mark Friedberg

Art Director

Ginger Tougas

Set Decorator

Rik Armour

Music

Mader

Music Producer

Peter Gordon

Music Production

Co-ordinator

Samantha Rozenfelds

Songs

"Roland Alphonso"

by Don Cherry;

"Ballad" by Mader

Costume Design

Elizabeth Bracco

Wardrobe Supervisor

Virginia Patton

Make-up

Lori Hicks

Titles

Eastern Optical EFX

Moses Weitzman

Sound Editors

Eliza Paley

Ira Spiegel

Sound Recordists

Pawel Wdowczak

Music:

Eric Liljestrand

Foley Recordist

George Lara

Sound Re-recordist

Dominick Tavella

Additional Sound Effects

Philip P. Soucek

Foley Artist

Brian Vancho

Aldolpho's Short Film

Steve Buscemi

Jo Andres

With

Michael Buscemi

John Buscemi

Lucian Buscemi

Steve Prestianni

Ruth Maleczek

Cast

Seymour Cassel

Joe

Steve Buscemi

Aldolpho

Jennifer Beals

Angelica

Will Patton

Skippy

Stanley Tucci

Gregoire

Pat Moya

Dang

Jim Jarmusch

Monty

Carol Kane

Barbara

Sully Boyer

Old Man

Steven Randazzo

Louis Bafardi

Francesco Messina

Frank Bafardi

Rockets Redglare

Guy

Elizabeth Bracco

Jackie

Debi Mazar

Suzie

Sam Rockwell

Pauli

Ruth Maleczek

Aldolpho's Mom

David Cantler

Joe's Son

Tessie Hogan

Joe's Ex-wife

Jamie Sanchez

Uncle Leo

Svetlana Rockwell

Ukrainian Lady Tenant

Paul Herman

Rent-a-car Clerk

Richard Boes

Nietzsche

Tony Kitaras

Dostoevsky

Kelvin McNeil Graves

Cop's Son

Robinson Youngblood

Cop

Mike Anderson

Little Man

Tiny

Gorilla

Ingrid Uribe

Angelica's Niece

Wilson Galarza

Ramon O'Neil

Angelica's Nephews

Anibal O'Lleras

Uncle Leo's friend

Yara

Angelica's Dog

8,595 feet

95 minutes

In a dowdy New York tenement block, Aldolpho Rollo dreams of the day when he's an internationally recognised film-maker, but in the meantime he's having difficulty paying the rent. Threatened with violence by the landlords, he has little choice but to put his 500-page screenplay *Unconditional Surrender* on the open market. Joe, a small-time gangland figure, answers the newspaper ad and to Aldolpho's surprise immediately offers him \$1,000 in cash, before sitting through a reel of Aldolpho's cringe-making arty student work and promising that he'll raise the \$250,000 estimated budget for his long-cherished feature.

Returning home to find his neighbour Angelica crying on the stairway, Aldolpho confesses his passion for her by offering to put her in his movie, though he's soon to argue over the subject matter with Joe, who favours a love story over Aldolpho's pretentious outpouring of angst. Subsequently, Joe drops a few 'family' names into the conversation and puts off the rent collectors before he and Aldolpho steal a car together to fund their film project. As such criminal activities continue, Aldolpho enjoys the fruits of the proceeds, while Joe also comes in useful by helping Angelica get back the \$3,000 dollars she'd lost to a swindling green card 'husband'.

Aldolpho now starts courting Angelica's affections in earnest, with Joe laying on limos and champagne but also creating tension when he comes on to her himself. The two men argue over the start date for their almost-forgotten movie, yet the financing is soon apparently secured when Aldolpho plays his part in a drugs drop. He fears the worst, however, when Joe fails to appear at their arranged rendezvous and later turns up with Angelica, whereupon the trio drive to the beach for a final confrontation. The money is stashed in a cuddly toy, but Aldolpho finally realises Joe has been stringing him along; as they tussle, Angelica accidentally wounds Joe with his pistol before storming off. Dying, Joe sits by the shore and Aldolpho resolves to honour his final wish - that he should make his movie, and make it a love story.

After three variably successful outings which have surfaced mainly on the festival circuit, writer-director Alexandre Rockwell's fourth feature succeeds wonderfully well by poking compassionate fun at his own early efforts. Based on his experiences as a 25-year-old trying to scrape the money together to make his first film, the 1981 updated Georg Buchner story *Lenz*, *In the Soup's* sentimental education pits innocence against experience, artist-in-the-making against ostensibly brutish philistine; but it proves genuinely disarming by refusing to direct our sympathies along the expected lines.

With its deliberately contrasting black-and-white cinematography, relaxed note of cinematic knowingness



Going places: Buscemi and Cassel

and enticing hipster casting - US indie icon Steve Buscemi, much-loved Casavetes associate Seymour Cassel, unexpected mainstream fugitive Jennifer Beals, plus spot-on cameos by Jim Jarmusch and Carol Kane as the seedy twosome behind cable access nude chat show *The Naked Truth* - Rockwell's film comes on like the post-jarmuschian essence of New York cool, only to expose Aldolpho's book-learned adolescent posings to the worldly wisdom of the relentlessly exuberant Joe. As characterised by Cassel's charismatic performance, it's the smiling *jolie de vivre* of Joe, this 'Zorba the Mook', that draws the audience in as it does Aldolpho, overturning most misgivings about his barely concealed nefarious lifestyle and providing the film with the kind of emotional core that many of Rockwell's counterparts on the American independent scene might do well to note.

While the opening image shows Aldolpho schmoozing with both Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche, Rockwell's narrative gradually pushes him into leaving such misplaced fantasies of his own artistic prowess far behind. His screenplay *Unconditional Surrender* - an unendurable hodge-podge of half-digested imagery from the heavy-weights of the European screen - prompts the exasperated Joe to plead that he should try his hand at something more accessible. "I love you" always sounds fresh to me" is his *cri de coeur*; "it's not artistic to look down on people," he adds when Aldolpho protests that mere romance is cinematically old hat. A midnight housebreaking encounter with a senile old man longing for his late wife and Aldolpho's own successes at wooing the previously unobtainable Angelica prove key factors in turning the young man's head, prompting the realisation that the movie he wants to make is in fact happening all around him.

Ironically, by toying with Aldolpho's naive film-making ambitions, Joe turns out to be just as much a fantasist as his young protégé, though he never lives to see the celluloid fruit of their combined endeavours. We do though, and this 'love story' touchingly turns its affections towards the under-used and undervalued gifts of Cassel's leathery features and, indeed, towards the whole film-making process itself. As Buscemi and Beals gambol with a Super-8 camera on a tenement roof magically flecked with snow, you'll have to go a long way to find another image that so palpably gets across the joy of capturing the light.

Trevor Johnston

Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media

USA 1992

Directors: Peter Wintonick, Mark Achbar

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

ICA

Production Company

Necessary Illusions/

National Film Board

of Canada

With the participation

of Telefilm Canada

In association with

Vision TV (Canada)

HOS - Humanist

Broadcasting

Corporation

(Hilversum)/

YLETV2 - The Finnish

Broadcasting

Corporation (Tampere)/

NRK - Norwegian

Broadcasting

Corporation (Oslo)/

Special Broadcasting

Service (Sydney)

With the support of

Ed Asner/Canada

Council/Explorations/

Canadian Institute For

International Peace

and Security/Chester

Foundation/

Lillian Fox/Harburg

Foundation/Laidlaw

(1984) Trust/J. Roderick

Macarthur Foundation/

Media Network (Fiscal

Sponsor)/Alan

Nashman Peacefund

Canada

Executive Producers

NFB:

Colin Neale

Dennis Murphy

Producers

Peter Wintonick

Mark Achbar

NFB:

Adam Symansky

Line Producer

Francis Miquet

Associate Producer

Francis Miquet

Directors of Photography

Mark Achbar

Norbert Bunge

Kip Durrin

Savas Kalogeras

Antonin Lhotsky

Francis Miquet

Barry Perles

Ken Reeves

Bill Snider

Kirk Tougas

Peter Wintonick

Video to Film

Pierre Bélanger

Videographers

Mark Achbar

Eddie Becker

Dan Garson

Michael Goldberg

William Turnley

Peter Walker

Peter Wintonick

Visual Effects

Sue Gourley

Opticals

Jimmy Chin

Michael Cleary

Michel Dubois

Richard Martin

Val Teodori

Animation Camera

Robin L.P. Bain

Ray Dumas

Lynda Pelley

Pierre Provost

Gilles Tremblay

Barry Wood

Graphics/Animation

Mark Achbar

◀ Chomsky's years as a revolutionary linguistic philosopher, his politicisation as a child of working-class Brooklyn Jewish parents during the Depression and his involvement in anti-war activism in the 1960s. These details are interspersed with Chomsky in debate with Michel Foucault, William Buckley Jr., Bill Boyers, and with comments by Tom Wolfe. Chomsky's analysis of the American media is approached through his theoretical 'propaganda models', concentrating on their applicability to the *New York Times* and in particular to US coverage of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor; and on the relationship between the media and the state during the Gulf crisis, at which time Chomsky asserts that the media were instrumental in America's going to war "in the manner of a totalitarian society".

Part Two: *Activating Dissent*. Chomsky is shown in debate with the hostile Dutch defence minister Fritz Bolkestein, and his involvement in the defence of the civil rights of controversial French historian Robert Faurisson is examined. The activist-intellectual's role is explored in relation to the growth of independent media networks in the US, as are his thoughts on the role of the media in the election and inauguration of George Bush. Finally, Chomsky discusses his deep-seated libertarian socialist convictions.

● In one of his recent series of Reith Lectures, "Representations of the Intellectual", Edward Said devoted much attention to the linguist, political activist and media analyst Noam Chomsky as a model of the committed modern American intellectual. Listening between the lines, however, one would not have been hard pressed to detect the tones of pretender-to-the-throne of chief dissident. While this may be unfair to Said, Chomsky has undoubtedly become characterised, over the past 25 years, as the most turbulent priest in the American academy. Such a cult of personality is one way in which the power of ideas can either be transmitted or diminished, depending on whether they are deemed germane or detrimental to society. It is the media that create such personalities and that simultaneously encourage and restrict the flow of information and ideas. Peter Wintonick and Mark Achbar's *Manufacturing Consent* is about this process - exploring not only what information gets through and why, but equally what happens to those, like Chomsky, who attempt to use the media in order to condemn their power to create the "necessary illusions" that maintain the political dominance of particular elite groups.

Five years in production, and a distillation of more than 120 hours of material, *Manufacturing Consent* is an ambitious *mise en scène* of ideas that, while aiming to explore something of Chomsky's life, is committed above all to his thoughts on the political economy of the media. Hence, it avoids the conventional documentary features -



The heart has reasons: Noam Chomsky at work

'voice of God' narration, chronological exposition - and makes its *modus operandi* dialectical both in form and content. Chomsky is presented largely in debate and interviews, and the juxtaposition of those against whom he is pitted is judicious, telling and often entertaining. In an interview with the arch-conservative William Buckley Jr. he admits that he is wont to lose his temper on such occasions. The sleek Buckley imperiously warns him not to, adding "If you did, I'd smash your face in" - Ivy League arrogance and a casual WASP brutality mobilised to put the upstart Jewish subversive in his place.

But across numerous interviews it becomes apparent that Chomsky's strength as a TV performer is itself the paradoxical corollary to his intellectual status: marginalised but an *agent provocateur* by his very presence. In drawing the fire of Buckley and his ilk, he exposes the enemy's position and deals with it amiably; then he returns a fusillade of facts in a voice that sometimes approximates a James Stewart tremor, but that either puts his opponents on the defensive or sees them falling back on to weak institutional rationalisations (the latter tactic being particularly favoured by *New York Times* journalists, it appears).

However, Chomsky's fondness for facts and die-hard research-based empiricism sometimes appears as a refuge rather than a strength. This tendency surfaces most clearly in the film's second part which broaches his defence of the French revisionist historian Robert Faurisson, impeached in France for declaring that there was no evidence to prove the existence of the Nazi death camps. In defending Faurisson's right to freedom of speech, Chomsky was accused of tacitly supporting his thesis and it is a credit that the complexities of Chomsky's position

are explored in a film which, on the whole, accepts his media analyses at face value.

But then it is hard, at times, not to - particularly when the case of the American media's silence over the genocidal invasion of East Timor by Indonesia is set against the clamorous outcry against the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. These two examples of America's news priorities are used to illustrate what Chomsky calls his "institutional" analysis of the media, and what others - here, the Dutch defence minister and the writer Tom Wolfe - have predictably dismissed as conspiracy theory.

If the first part of *Manufacturing Consent* imaginatively illustrates selected Chomskyan ideas on American media, the second part looks for alternative media networks and finds a host of print media, local radio and TV stations that are resisting the *New York Times* and *CNN* media hegemony. It also features an absolutely hypnotic sequence filmed at George Bush's Presidential inauguration ceremony. To the twin accompaniments of Laurie Anderson's "O Superman" and the Presidential address, the camera threads through the crowds and away across the rooftops - Bush's voice never fading in its amplified metallic drone - until it comes across the backstreet clusters of satellite vans, as if to show us where the real power lies.

This is an unmissable and heartening film, if only for the wonderful spectacle of Chomsky live in a Laramie shopping mall on "the world's largest point-of-purchase video-wall installation" and informing a radio presenter, who insists on styling herself "Jane USA" that: "It's true that the emperor doesn't have any clothes, but the emperor doesn't like to be told it".

Chris Darke

Mensonge (The Lie)

France 1992

Director: François Margolin

Certificate

15

Distributor

Gala

Production Companies

Les Films Alain Sarde/Cuei Lavalette Production/FR3 Films In association with Canal Plus CNC

Executive Producer

Nicolas Daguet

Producer

Alain Sarde

Production Executive

François Cuel

Production Manager

Eric Bensoussan

Casting

Lissa Pillu

Christiane Lebrima

Assistant Directors

Hubert Engammarre Anne-Isabelle Estrada

Screenplay

Denis Saada

François Margolin

Based on an original idea by Denis Saada

Director of Photography

Caroline Champetier

In colour

Yes

Editor

Martine Giordano

Production Designers

Julie Sfez

Arnaud de Moleron

Set Decorator

Julie Sfez

Music Extract

"Sonata for Piano in F major" KV 332 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, performed by Maria Joao Pires; "Le Professeur Taranne" by Jorge Arriagada

Songs

"Sexual Healing" by Marvin Gaye, Odell Brown, David Ritz, performed by Marvin Gaye; "You Make Me Feel" by Sylvester James, James Wirrick, performed by Jimmy Somerville; "Tornero" by Polizzi, Natili, Ramoino, performed by I Santo California; "Priscilla" by Bortek, Kbye, performed by Jad Wio; "She Drives Me Crazy" by Gift, Steel, performed by Fine Young Cannibals;

Costume Design

Catherine Meurisse

Wardrobe Supervisor

Domitille Brion

Make-up

Françoise Andrejka

Sound Editors

Michel Klochendler

Olivier Laurent

Sound Recordist

Jean-Jacques Ferran

Sound Re-recordist

Gérard Rousseau

Sound Effects

Pascal Chauvin

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jean Louis Aitola

Cast

Nathalie Baye

Emma

Didier Sandre

Charles

Hélène Laplower

Louise

Marc Citti

Louis

Dominique Besnéhard

Rozenberg

Adrien Beau

Romain

Christophe Bourzeiller

Gégé

Louis Ducroux

Grandfather

Josiane Stoloru

Viviane

Francis Girard

JR

Bruno Todeschini

Pick-up Man

André Talmy

Maria

Evelyn Kar

Mémé

Nathalie Mann

Marie

Yveline Hamon

Madame Galtier

Jean-Claude Lucas

Charles' Brother

Dominique Rousseau

Agnès

Rosine Young

Véronique

Pascal N'Zond

Isana Craculnesca

Passers-by

Véronique Lévy

Girl at Party

Simon Sportich

Guy at Party

Djamel Barok

Man at Cabin

Marc Brunet

Daniel Schenmetzier

Men in Bar

Aladin Reibel

Jean-Loup

Patrick Aurnagac

Boy at Tuileries

Louis-Do de Lancquesaing

Rémi

Denis Saada

Robert

Judith Margolin

Mathilde

Raphael Daruy

Mathilde's Brother

Valérie Champetier

Eric Gheball

Nina Glaser

Voices

7,979 feet

89 minutes

Subtitles

● Christmas. Emma, who is pregnant with her second child, attends a party with her gay friend Rozenberg. She flirts, but refuses to go to bed with one of her fellow guests, telling him that she has never been unfaithful in ten years of marriage. The next day, her husband, Charles, a foreign affairs journalist, returns from

an assignment bearing gifts for her and their eight-year-old son, Romain. He is not enthusiastic about Emma's pregnancy, and the couple argue while looking for a larger flat. Emma returns home to find a letter from her gynaecologist informing her that a routine ante-natal HIV test is positive. Emma is desperate but is unable to contact her doctor and her best friend is too busy to help; even the dependable Rozenberg is away. She is unable to tell Charles the bad news because he has accepted a last minute call for an assignment abroad.

When the family's au pair, Louise, and her boyfriend, Louis, return home, they find Emma distraught and drunk. Taking matters in hand, Louise dispatches Romain to his grandparents and sets about helping Emma to find out which of Charles's former lovers may have been responsible. Emma starts by ringing all the women she finds listed in Charles' diary, but is unable to find anybody who may have been the source of his infection. When Louis goes to a bar for which Charles has a phone number, he finds it is a haunt for gay men. He tells Louise, but they decide not to inform Emma. Their evasive attitude arouses her suspicions; she visits the bar and realises that Charles is bisexual.

By now, Rozenberg has returned and he helps Emma move out. Meanwhile Charles comes home to find his wife angry and indifferent, offering no explanation for her behaviour. He reacts by picking up a casual contact in the park. Emma follows him, but drives away without allowing Charles to speak. Rozenberg refuses to divulge Emma's whereabouts, but Charles traces her through Romain's school. He eventually persuades Emma to talk and promises to give up his other life. They agree to face the crisis together.

With the notable exception of Cyril Collard's *Savage Nights*, cinema and television have generally chosen to emphasise the guilt and suffer-

ing of HIV-positive protagonists rather than their lifestyles, an approach which either reduces Aids to the level of a terminal disease or malignancy (*Longtime Companion*), or explores the well-worn route of betrayal implicit in the sexual mode of transmission (*Screen Two's Sweet As You Are*).

Mensonge deals with an Aids 'victim' who is neither gay nor a junkie. Adopting a stance similar to *Sweet As You Are*, in which housewife Miranda Richardson wrestled with the knowledge that her husband was HIV positive after a casual affair with a female student, the film concentrates on Emma's 'tragedy' rather than Charles's way of life. She is a thirtysomething housewife with perfect *croissant et café* credentials (jet-setting journalist husband, the hint of a media career and an au pair) whose bourgeois house of cards is blown away by her test results and the revelation that her husband is bisexual. The film emphasises Emma's least attractive traits (her exploitation of her gay friend Rozenberg and unfair treatment of the au pair), but her character is simply not as interesting as Charles's, a foreign correspondent with a double life, who dices with death in encounters with casual pick-ups while maintaining a nuclear-family front.

Unfortunately, Charles is not in evidence for much of the film. He is systematically demonised in his absence for bailing out before the family Christmas celebrations, enjoying affairs with other women, and practising unsafe sex with gay men. No wonder, then, that when he returns to face retribution, after halfheartedly accusing his wife of not being receptive to his attempts to explain, he promises to renounce his former ways. It is unclear whether redemption will follow his rejection of his previous lifestyle, but there is no doubting Charles's return to the fold. Ironically, the virus thus succeeds in strengthening the family despite exposing the pretence that has held it together.

Farrah Anwar



No particular place to go: Nathalie Baye and Didier Sandre

Mr Wonderful

USA 1992

Director: Anthony Minghella

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Samuel Goldwyn Company

Producer

Marianne Moloney

Co-producer

Steven Felder

Associate Producers

Vicki Polon

Production Supervisor

Thomas A. Imperato

Production Controller

Julia Gilbert

Production Co-ordinator

Ellen Millers

Unit Production Manager

Steven Felder

Location Manager

Donna Bloom

Post-production Supervisor

Johly Dale

Casting

David Ruben

Assistant Directors

Steve E. Andrews

Screenplay

Anthony Minghella

Based on an original screenplay by Amy Schor, Vicki Polon

Director of Photography

Geoffrey Simpson

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operator

Ken Ferris

Editor

John Tintori

Production Designer

Doug Kraner

Art Director

Steve Saklad

Set Decorator

Alyssa Winter

Set Dressers

Dennis Zack

Costume Designer

Anne Wenginger

Music Editor

Chris Nelson

Scenic Artist

Robert Topol

Sound

Joel Ossenfort

Special Effects

Rand Angelicola

Co-ordinator

Steve Kirshoff

Music

Michael Gore

Music Extract

"Ombra mai fu" by G.F. Handel

Orchestrations

Oscar Castro-Neves

Music Editor

Jeff Carson

Song

"Mr Wonderful" by Larry Holofcanar, George David Weiss, Jerry Bock

Costume Design

John Dunn

Associate:

Kathleen Gerlach

Wardrobe Supervisors

Hartnell Taylor

Make-up Artist

Timothy J. Alberts

Make-up Artist

Bernadette Mazur

Title Design

Dan Perri

Titles/Opticals

Mercer Title

Optical Effects Ltd

Supervising Sound Editor

Douglas Murray

Sound Editor

Clare C. Freeman

ADR Editors

Suzanne Fox

Foley Editor

Craig Dellinger

Foley Artists

Marian Wilde

Sound Recordists

Chris Newman

Music:

Joel W. Moss

Foley Recordists

Richard Duarte

Sound Re-recordists

Eric Thompson

Sound Effects Editor

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

David Parker

Sound Effects Editor

James L. LeBrecht

Foley Artists

Margie O'Malley

Technical Advisor

Jennifer Myers

Stunts

Joe Iacono

Cast

Jerry Hewitt

Norman Douglas

Eugene Harrison

Cast

Matt Dillon

Gus

Annabella Sciorra

Lee

Mary-Louise Parker

Rita

William Hurt

Tom

Vincent D'Onofrio

Dominic

David Barry Gray

Rope

Dan Hedaya

Harvey

Bruce Kirby

Dante

Luis Guzman

Juice

Jessica Harper

Funny Face

Joanna Martin

Loretta

Jennifer Alonzi

Frank E. Smurlo Jr

Couple on Train

Bruce Altman

Mr Wonderful

Peter Appel

Harry

Paul Bates

Marlon

James Buelch

Raymond Michael Karl

Lecturers

Bernard Currid

Botanic Garden Worker

Annabella Field

Patti

James Gandolfini

Mike

Tanesha Marie Gary

Myraah Moore

Background Singers

William Goldberg

Muriel Manners'

Husband

Geoffrey Grider

Joe the Water

William Duff Griffin

Mr Christie

Saverio Guerra

Paul

Angela Hall

Betty

Carol Honda

Emergency Room

Nurse

Wallace Hornady

Organist

John Christopher Jones

Miller

Mara Keeney

Woman in Elevator

Eric Kollegger

George

Adam Lefevre

Kevin Klassic

Wooes Lippin

Hannah

James Lorincz

Jos

Martin Macvittie

Martin

Harsh Nayyar

Credit Union Officer

Joe Paparone

Building Super

Frank Pellegrino

Man in Elevator

John Rothman

Ralph

Brooke Smith

Jan

Wooes Aspillaga Vasquez

Maria

Floyd Varino

MC

Mary Louise Wilson

Muriel Manners

Hans Zarles

Boy Soprano

Gus, an electrical repair worker in New York, is at a family christening when his ex-wife, Lee, appears. While they bicker at the back of the church, his current girlfriend, Rita, a nurse, looks on. Back home she talks about his lack of commitment and reluctance to live together. At work Gus's colleagues are performing repairs outside a deserted bowling alley, the site of shared teenage memories. They decide to renovate it as a co-op but Gus's money troubles - notably his alimony payments to Lee - prevent him from joining in. He visits her at college where she's studying poetry, but they start arguing. Meanwhile his potential business partners are becoming impatient. Gus revisits Lee at the public gardens where she works part-time, hoping to persuade her to get a better job so that she can support herself. Having no luck with this ploy, he's inspired by the sight of a couple meeting up for a blind date and decides to play matchmaker in order to marry Lee off. Uncertain about Tom, the married literature professor she's having an affair with, Lee halfheartedly agrees to give it a go. Lee is inundated by ill-matched suitors. Gus then surprises Rita by suggesting that they move in together. Tom drops by Lee's home while Gus is visiting, sparking off a jealous outburst in which he derides Tom for his moral duplicity. Days later, at a hospital fund-raising event, Gus and Rita bump into her with a new suitor, Dominic, who seems her ideal man. The following day Gus arrives at his new flat to find that Rita has sent the removal truck back. She can tell that he's still in love with Lee and so is ending the relationship. An accident at work almost kills Gus's partner, and Gus is himself injured while rescuing him. Lee visits the hospital where he chats with Rita. Gus discharges himself and returns to his partner's bedside to announce to the co-op members that he's sold his beloved sports car and is now in on the bowling-alley venture. A few days later Lee returns to her flat to find that Gus has strung fairy lights over her garden. He admits to how he feels about her and asks whether she really loves Dominic, who has just proposed. As Lee hesitates, Gus walks off; then Dominic appears and asks her to answer what he's just overheard. As Gus rides home on the subway Lee appears in the next carriage, tapping on the window and asking for "Mr Wonderful".

Despite the overt gesturing NYC-wards - from night-time city -

scapes to Italian-American domestic interiors – there's an aura of Englishness, or more precisely middle-class uptightness, that pervades and disrupts *Mr Wonderful's* transatlantic urban romance. There's something polite and restrained that relegates it to the inappropriately *nice*. As with Anthony Minghella's previous feature *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, the implications of the title – emotional hyperbole with a child-like ring to it – are carried over into a narrative that depicts elation as regression, desire as a prelude to commitment.

Here is a catalogue of high drama – near-fatal accidents, new love lost and old love rediscovered – and yet there's a distinct lack of passion; instead there are little flurries of excitability, people reacting but fundamentally aspiring to an equilibrium of respectability.

But this isn't a self-conscious study of detachment, like Rohmer's ironic commentaries on bourgeois mores. Minghella's championing of passionlessness seems more like Mills and Boon propriety. Gus and Lee's love is special because it is first love; Gus's manual skills bestow him with an iconic honest-worker authenticity in contrast to Tom's duplicitous (and sexually decadent?) man of letters; and the fairy-lights in the garden are romantically, enchantingly transformative. The most sustained display of emotion comes from the co-op members in expectations of renovating the bowling alley; but yet again they're not allowed to articulate what it means to their adult lives. Instead they're depicted as rough-and-tumble kids, teasing and cajoling one another.

When, in *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, Michael Maloney's character quells a heated row by performing some impromptu magic tricks, you see the same authorial ethos at work: when emotions run high make everyone act endearingly young.

Otherwise, Minghella just lets them talk. Tom – with a biography of Camus under one arm – breathlessly tells Lee how he feels about her as she sits flicking through Donne's love poems. Gus is regaled by his partner with accounts of his latest erotic adventures. The women at a barbecue sit in the kitchen talking about love and loss. Always at a remove, they tell but don't show. Once or twice characters cry for what's been left unsaid, but the taciturn Gus does neither and so is rendered emotionally opaque.

Correspondingly, Lee looks confused much of the time when Gus is around and only hits an emotional peak when it seems as though she might lose her essay on her computer. It's not the characters' values we're witnessing, it's the director's voice possessing them like an alien force. If only Minghella would break out of his obsessive English manneredness, then maybe his films would become more than flattering mirrors for the audience. Until then there's the tang of TV drama about his big screen work: life in close up, film closed down.

Paul Tarrago

Naked

UK 1993

Director: Mike Leigh

Certificate

18

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

Thin Man Productions
In association with
Film Four
International
With the participation
of British Screen

Producer

Simon Channing-Williams

Production Co-ordinator

Stephanie Faugier

Production Manager

Georgina Lowe

Location Managers

Mark Mostyn

Neil Lee

Casting

Paddy Stern
Susie Parriss

Assistant Directors

Kupert Ryle-Hodges

Toby Sherborne

Josh Robertson

Zerlina Hughes

Screenplay

Mike Leigh

Director of Photography

Dick Pope

Colour

Agfa Colour Film

prints by Metrocolor

Camera Operator

Dick Pope

Steadicam Operator

Andy Shuttleworth

Editor

Jon Gregory

Production Designer

Alison Chitty

Art Director

Eve Stewart

Music

Andrew Dickson

Music Performed by

Harpist:

Skailla Kanga

Viola:

Roger Chase

Double Bass:

Paul Spiers

Music Co-ordinator

Step Parikian

Costume Design

Lindy Hemming

Wardrobe Supervisor

Sharon Long

Make-up

Chris Blundell

Title Design

Chris Allies

Title Opticals

David Smith

Dubbing Editor

Sue Baker

Foley Editor

Imogen Pollard

Sound Recordists

Dubbing:

Peter Maxwell

Music:

André Jacquemin

Dolby stereo

Cast

David Thewlis

Johnny

Lesley Sharp

Louise

Katrina Carillidge

Sophie

Greg Crutwell

Jeremy

Claire Skinner

Sandra

Peter Wright

Brian

Ewen Bremner

Archie

Susan Vidler

Maggie

Deborah MacLaren

Woman in Window

Gina McKee

Café Girl

Carolina Giammotta

Masseuse

Elizabeth Barrington

Giselle

Darren Tunstall

Poster Man

Robert Putt

Chauffeur

Lynda Rooke

Victim

Angela Curran

Car Owner

Peter Whitman

Mr Halpern

Jo Abercrombie

Woman in Street

Eloise Britten

Girl in Porsche

David Foxe

Tea Bar Owner

Mike Avenall

Toby Jones

Men at Tea Bar

Sandra Voe

Bag Lady

11,836 feet

131 minutes



Miserable misogynist: David Thewlis as Johnny

tensions. Johnny and Sophie have sex in the flat. After dining out with his masseuse, Jeremy takes their waitress Giselle back to his flat, where he turns violent. The next day, Sophie tells Johnny she loves him; he becomes increasingly physically abusive, a sequence culminating in violent sex. By the evening, Johnny paces the flat aggressively while Sophie pleads for his attention. He pushes her away and walks out with his belongings.

Arriving in Soho, Johnny encounters Archie, a homeless young Glaswegian who has mislaid his girlfriend, Maggie. Johnny takes the piss out of him and offers to stay put while Archie looks further afield. Maggie arrives; she and Johnny find Archie near some railway arches where homeless people shelter. Leaving them fighting, Johnny shelters for the night in an office porch. The middle-aged security guard, Brian, unlocks the door and, revealing that the office is uninhabited, furtively whisks Johnny inside for the night. An extended tour of the office becomes an existential confrontation taking in Nostradamus and Revelations; adamant that humanity is racing towards extinction, Johnny is derisive about the gentle, world-weary Brian's plans to retire to Ireland.

After the two men have watched a woman dancing drunkenly in the window of a flat opposite, Johnny goes to the woman's door and talks his way in. Inside, she responds masochistically to his aggressive questions. Turning violent, Johnny tears at her hair and clothes, but rejects her sexually and humiliates her, then leaves, stealing some books. Back with Brian, he denies the latter's accusations of sexual violence. The two men go to a café, where Johnny chats up a waitress, and then part company.

Sophie arrives at the flat to find Jeremy on the sofa. He introduces himself as Sebastian Hawkes, claiming to be her landlord and a friend of Sandra's. He turns violent, then makes Sophie put on Sandra's nurse's uniform and rapes her. Johnny waits for the café waitress to leave work; passively, she agrees to let him come to her flat. Louise arrives home to see 'Sebastian' throwing £400 at Sophie as she lies on

the floor. Though shaking and hurt, Sophie will not tell Louise what has happened. 'Sebastian' refuses to leave; the women threaten to phone the police, but hold back, afraid that they will side with him. Johnny asks the melancholy waitress if he can stay the night; she panics and tells him to go, which he does after pushing her around. While 'Sebastian' sleeps, Louise and Sophie escape to the pub, where they discuss the futility of relationships. Johnny cadges a lift from a bill-sticker; uninvited, he joins the man in his night-time work until the latter kicks him on to the pavement in frustration and drives off, with Johnny's holdall still in the van. Attacked by youths in an alley, Johnny manages to stagger back to Louise's but collapses on arrival. 'Sebastian' watches contemptuously as Sophie and Louise tend the delirious Johnny before returning to bed, inviting both of the women to join him.

Next day a shocked Sandra arrives home. 'Sebastian' greets her; she gives him two minutes to leave. Louise gets him to unzip his flies and offers to slice his penis off with a breadknife. Smirking, he goes. Louise and Johnny talk alone in the bathroom and seem to renew their relationship. Louise tells him she's going back to Manchester for good, and he seems to agree to go with her. Sophie grabs an overnight bag and walks out. While Louise is handing in her notice, Johnny takes what's left of Jeremy's money and hops, with difficulty, away down the street.

"You've had the living body and you're bored with it," Johnny hostilely accuses Louise, railing at her for turning her back on Manchester to become "a career girl in the big shitty". "You've had the universe and you're bored with it." The existential dimension to such moments – and David Thewlis's brilliant, fierce, intensely irritating near-monologue of a central performance is full of them – marks out *Naked* as a startling leap from the petty comic viciousness of Mike Leigh's domestic satires into darker, more complex philosophical territory.

It's a deeply problematic journey, conducted via the double-edged figure

of Johnny – a misogynist, Mancunian motormouth and visionary prophet of millennial doom – as he wanders London quoting theories from James Gleick's *Chaos* and dispensing warnings from the Book of Revelations like some nihilist Jesus of Montreal.

In Johnny's satirical interpretation, the Mark 666 foreseen in Revelations, without which no one will be able to buy or sell, is the bar-code. It will soon brand not just products but people – "They're going to replace plastic with flesh: fact!" – and the end of the world is truly nigh.

Much of the publicity surrounding *Naked's* double win at Cannes – Best Actor for Thewlis and Best Director for Leigh – has focused, misleadingly, on its depiction of London's homeless. True, insecure housing is a theme of sorts; from Louise and Sophie, harassed by an intruder who may or may not be their landlord, to the sad café waitress, house-sitting rent-free among shelves of classical literature, few of the characters can take the roof over their head for granted. But the film's insights into life on the streets are pretty thin. The truly homeless characters, Archie and Maggie, are treated as heartlessly as Leigh's past bourgeois targets, while Johnny's (arguably self-inflicted) nights sleeping rough are predominantly a device for exploring the director's obsessions with millennial crisis and oblivion. In this context, Cardboard City is just another omen of a species heading for extinction. "Evolution isn't over," Johnny tells Brian. "Humanity is just a cracked egg, and the omelette stinks." At other moments, though, the pair's surreal philosophical duel hits on sublime political insights. When Brian explains to Johnny that "you must be invisible – I must be seen," he lets slip a near-universal truth about the relation of those with token power to the dispossessed.

"My feelings about *Naked* are as ambivalent as my feelings about our chaotic late 20th-century world," hedges Leigh in a brief statement in the film's press brochure. "I don't really want to pontificate about this film. I'd rather let it speak for itself." But silence is risky when you've invented a rapist/seer as your dominant mouthpiece, and *Naked's* nasty taste of misogyny and sexual violence often makes it gruelling viewing for the wrong reasons. (Leigh fans hoping for a comedy should note that *Naked* produces only the chilling sound of laughter in the dark.)

Contempt for women is presented as yet another symptom of millennial angst, and no stratum of masculinity is immune. When champagne-sipping Jeremy (a preposterous cardboard yuppie so little recognisable from real life as to be virtually abstract) attacks Giselle with a large stuffed reptile, the male terror of mortality gets precedence over the female terror of assault. "I'm going to commit suicide on my 40th birthday," he screams. "I don't want to live beyond 40 – do you?"

Claire Monk

Once Upon a Forest

USA 1992

Director: Charles Grosvenor

Certificate

U

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

Hanna-Barbera

In association with

HTV Cymru/Wales

Executive Producers

William Hanna

Paul Gertz

Producers

David Kirschner

Jerry Mills

Production Co-ordinator

Yvonne Palmer

Production Manager

Zahra Dowlatbadi

Post-production Manager

Terry W. Moore

HTV Cymru Production

Consultants

John Watkin

Mike Young

Casting

Mike Fenton

Judy Taylor

Allison Cowitt

Additional:

Gordon Hunt

Kris Zimmerman

Voice Directors

Kelly Ward

Mark Young

Timing Director

Ray Patterson

Screenplay

Mark Young

Kelly Ward

Based on the story

by Rae Lambert

Camera Supervisors

Daniel Bunn

Steven A. Mills

Wang Films:

Ling Jinn Yih

Colour

CFI

Camera Operators

Roncie Hantke

Robert Jacobs

James Keefer

Neil Owen Viker

Fredrick T. Ziegler

Wang Films:

Jin Guey Fuh

Tarnng Shiang I

Jaime Diaz Studio:

Oswaldo Garcia

Visual Effects Supervisor

Glenn Chaika

Character Design

Judith Holmes Clarke

Character Design

Development:

Joseph Ekers

Animation Director

Dave Michener

Additional Animation

Wang Films

Associate Producer:

James Wang

Production Managers:

Catherine Winder

Steve Ho

Bob Marples

Production Supervisor:

Judy Chang

Additional Animation

Lapiz Azul Animacion

Production Supervisor:

Manuel J. Garcia

Additional Animation

A-Film

Production Supervisor:

Anders Mastrup

Additional Animation

The Hollywood

Cartoon Company

Production Supervisor:

Rocky Solotoff

Studio Executive:

G. Sue Shakespeare

Supervising Animator:

Skip Jones

Additional Animation

Phoenix Animation Ltd

Supervising Animator:

Chris Sauve

Production Supervisor:

Michael Hefferon

Production

Co-ordinator:

Peter Denomme

Key Animators

Joseph Ekers

Cynthia Wells

Lapiz Azul Animacion:

Javier Gutierrez

Ventura Rodriguez

Manuel Galiana

Paco Alaminos

Sergio Pablos

A-Film:

Jorgen Lerdam

Animation

Barry Anderson

Frank Andrina

Brenda Banks

Roger Chiasson

Mark Christiansen

Zeon Davush

David Feiss

Ralph Fernan

Brad Forbush

Kent Hammerstrom

Joe Hawkins

Dan Hunn

Audre Knutson

Ernesto Lopez

Sean Newton

Mike Nguyen

William Nunes

Dana O'Connor

Kevin Petrillak

Kunio Shimamura

I-Sin "Cyndi" Tang

Robert Tyler

Kevin Wurzer

John Walker

Lapiz Azul Animacion:

Miguel Alaminos

Ma Carmen Gonzalez

Alberto Conejo

Roberto Garcia

Pedro Mohedana

Luis Varela

Antonio Tena

Mariano Rueda

Jaime Diaz Studio:

Carlos Aguerro

Silvia Nanni

Miguel Nanni

Alberto Grisolia

Natalio Zirulnik

Nestor Cordoba

Rodolfo Murruverria

Roberto Barrios

Omar Hetchenkoff

Franco Bittolo

A-Film:

Michael Helmuth

Jesper Moller

Karsten Klierich

Stefan Fjeldmark

Meelis Arulepp

Anna Geller Nielsen

Kim Hagen Jensen

The Hollywood

Cartoon Company:

Linda Miller

Mark Koesler

Mark Pudeiner

Jon Hooper

Matthew Bates

Chad Stewart

Phoenix

Animation Ltd:

Charlie Bonafacio

Jens Pindal

Doug Bennett

Jamie Oliff

Hanna Kukal

Marc Sevier

John Collins

Greg Court

Ron Zorman

Rob Shediowich

Doug Smith

Chris Shouten

Matias

Marcos Animation:

Matias Marcos

Alberto Conejo

Visual Effects Animators

Margaret Craig-Chang

Kathleen Quaife-Hodge

Kim Knowlton

John Armstrong

Jeff Howard

Effects Animation

Supervisors (Wang Films)

Alfred Holter

Frog Shy

Effects Animation

(Wang Films)

Victor Lu

Adam Wu

Harold Tzeng

Richard Tsay

Mars Yu

Jackie Lu

Computer Animation

Mark Swanson

Productions

Animation Checking

Supervisor

Gina Bradley

Animation Checkers

Diane Matranga

Bob Revell

Susan Burke

Beverly Randles

Laura Craig

Bonnie Blough

Cindy Goode

Wang Films:

Peng Yuh Tzy

Jong I Fang

Tsaur Shu Ping

Oswaldo Garcia

Final Check Supervisor

(Wang Films)

Jang Yuh Tsy

Layout Supervisor

James Beihold

Layout Artists

Simon Varela Cristales

Bill Proctor

Scott Uehara

Arlan Jewell

Grigor Boyadjiev

James C. Breckenridge

Franklyn F. Brunner

Spencer G. Davis

Shelly Dremann

David Womersley

Enrique May

Owen Fitzgerald

David P. Martin

Darrell Rooney

Dave Hilberman

Lew Ott

Herb Hazelton

Carol Lundberg

Background Supervisor

Dennis Durrell

Wang Films:

David Womersley

Lou Bing Hwang

Background Keys

George Taylor

Additional:

Donna Prince

Mia Raynis

Craig Armstrong

Bonnie Callahan

Background (Wang Films)

Lin Mei Chun

Liu Jiu Chieh

Yeh Ching Liang

Shen Kai Chen

Fu Pei Kai

Lan Wen An

Yiin Gwo Chi

Chang Chien Shyong

Jou Pen Kai

Background Layout

Jaime Diaz Studio:

◀ the three furlings rescue him before continuing through the perilous land of bulldozers and cranes until they reach the fertile valley in which they will find the herbs they need. The valley inhabitants are sceptical of success since lungwort only grows inaccessibly high on the cliff face. But the furlings build a flapper-wing-a-ma-thing and snatch the herb from a crevice as they fly past. Now in possession of both herbs they fly back to Cornelius and revive Michelle. Meanwhile the lorry driver has alerted the authorities to the ecological tragedy and men are suddenly everywhere in the wood. Despite Cornelius's fears that they have come to hunt the animals down, the men instead rescue Edgar from a trap and restore the other animals to health and safety.

The best antidote to this film is probably *Bambi* which, despite my reservations (S&S, July 1993) is infinitely superior to this mediocre feature. The forest settings in *Bambi* show a lush and magical place where the rivers sparkle and the depth of the forest is breathtaking. In contrast the backgrounds and designs for *Once Upon a Forest* look cheap and shoddy. The animation is half-hearted and the characters have uncertain designs, making their species indeterminate. The voice characterisations are woeful and it's a matter of wonder that Michael Crawford wished to participate.

The ecological basis for the plot has some possibilities but these are quickly dispatched in the routine 'courageous-children-under-threat-overcome-all' theme, which fails to connect with the larger issue of toxic spillage and its resulting damage to the countryside. Although the press notes indicate that the film's team is committed to environmental issues, the film itself lacks the zeal that might have saved it. The blurb also tells us that the creators turned to nature lore to give each of the characters a distinctive personality. The example given is Edgar's spectacles, based, we are told, on the fact that moles live underground.

Once Upon a Forest also suffers from indeterminacy of location. The gospel-singing marsh birds (the most ill-judged of the sequences) and the American accents of the animals locate the action somewhere between New Orleans and New York, but the name 'Dapplewood' and Crawford's voice point to the Home Counties. It's often been said that co-productions run the risk of crashing in the mid-Atlantic – a warning that should have been heeded here by HTV and their American partners. Children deserve better than this and, at their best, the Hanna-Barbera production team are capable of producing it – viz *Tom and Jerry*, in its early days one of the best children's series ever. The miraculous reappearance of all the animals at the end is a *deus ex machina* which left me rubbing my eyes for fear of having slumbered through some twist in the storyline, but it's the script that needs shaking.

Jill McGreal

The Piano

Australia 1993

Director: Jane Campion

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Jan Chapman Productions
In association with CIBY 2000

Executive Producer

Alain Depardieu

Producer

Jan Chapman

Associate Producer

Mark Turnbull

Production Co-ordinator

Moir Grant

Production Manager

Chloe Smith

Unit Manager

John Wilson

Location Manager

Sally Sherratt

Post-production

Supervisor

Stephen O'Rourke

2nd Unit Director

Colin Englert

Casting

New Zealand:

Diana Rowan

UK:

Susie Figgis

USA:

Victoria Thomas

Australia:

Alison Barrett

Assistant Directors

Mark Turnbull

Victoria Hardy

Charles Haskell

Therese Mangos

2nd Unit:

Chris Short

Studio:

Simon Millar

Screenplay

Jane Campion

Director of Photography

Stuart Dryburgh

Colour

Eastman Colour

Underwater Photography

Rob Hunter

Camera Operators

Alun Bollinger

2nd Unit:

Rewa Harre

Steadicam Operators

Ian Jones

John Mahaffie

Opticals

Roger Cowland

Graphics

Optical and Graphics

Editor

Veronika Jenet

Production Designer

Andrew McAlpine

Supervising Art Director

Gregory Keen

Set Decorator

Meryl Cronin

Set Dressers

Graham Aston

Phred Palmer

Manu Sinclair

Draughtsman

Neil Henson

Head Scenic Artist

Tim Merton

Scenic Artists

Barry Ellery

Trevor Lithgow

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Ken Durey

Wayne Kugg

Underwater Special Effects

Tad Pride

Music/Music Director

Michael Nyman

Music Performed by

Members of the

Munich Philharmonic

Orchestra

Saxophones:

John Harle

David Roach

Andrew Findon

Solo Piano:

Holly Hunter

Singing/Piano Instructors

Anna Paquin:

Judy Jones

Holly Hunter:

Margie Balter

Choreography

Mary-Anne Schultz

Costume Design

Janet Patterson

Wardrobe Co-ordinator

Barbara Darragh

Jeweller

Joquin Zepeda

Milliner

Rosy Boylan

Make-up Supervisor

Noriko Watanabe

Make-up

Katherine James

Francina Smeets

Prosthetics Supervisor

Bob McCarron

Prosthetics

Marjory Hamlin

Hair Consultant

Stephen Price

Title Design

Peter Long

Sound Design

Lee Smith

Sound Editors

Gary O'Grady

Jeanine Chialvo

Supervising ADR Editor

Annabelle Sheehan

Sound Recordists

Tony Johnson

Gethin Creagh

Music:

Michael J. Dutton

Dolby stereo

ADR Sound Re-recordists

Robert Deschaine

David Jobe

Simon Hewett

Richard Jenkins

Sound Effects Editor

Peter Townend

Sound Effects

Martin Oswin

Foley Artists

Steve Burgess

Gerry Long

Advisers

Maori Dialogue:

Waihoroi Shortland

Selwyn Muri

Maori

Performance/Language:

Temuera Morrison

Sign Language Instructors

Holly Hunter:

Darlene Allen

Anna Paquin:

Holly Hunter

Stunt Co-ordinators

Robert Bruce

Dive:

Tony Thew

Underwater Stunt Doubles

Holly Hunter:

Georgina Gilbert

Sue Easdon

Dog Handler

Mark Vette

Cast

Holly Hunter

Ada

Harvey Keitel

Baines

Sam Neill

Stewart

Anna Paquin

Flora

Kerry Walker

Aunt Morag

Genevieve Lemon

Nessie

Tungia Baker

Hira

Ian Mune

Reverend

Peter Demmett
Head Seaman
Te Wharua Skipwith
Chief Nihe

Pete Smith
Hone

Bruce Allpress

Blind Piano Tuner

Cliff Curtis

Mana

Carla Ruppha

Heni

Mahina Tumu

Mere

Hori Ahipene

Mutu

Gordon Hatfield

Te Kori

Mere Boynton

Chief Nihe's Daughter

Kirsten Batley

Marama

Tania Burnay

Mahina

Annie Edwards

Te Tiwha

Harina Haare

Roimata

Christina Harimato

Parearau

Steve Kanata

Amohia

P.J. Karamia

Taua

Sonny Kirikiri

Tame

Alain Makihia

Kahutia

Greg Mayor

Tipi

Neil Mika Gudsell

Tahu

Guy Moana

Kohuru

Joseph Otini

Rehia

Glynis Paraha

Mairangi

Riki Pickering

Rongo

Eru Potaka-Dewes

Pitama

Liane Rangli Henry

Te Ao

Huihana Rewa

Te Hikumu

Tamati Rice

Pito

Paora Sharples

Hotu

George Smallman

Tuu

Kereama Teu

Te Kukuni

Poamo Tulaili

Kahu

Susan Tulaili

Pare

Kahumana Waaka

Waimiria

Lawrence Whareau

Kamira

Eddie Campbell

Roger Goodburn

Stephen Hall

Greg Johnson

Wayne McGoran

Seaman

Jon Brazier

Wedding Photographer

Stephen Pappas

Bluebeard

Nicola Baigent

Ruby Codner

Karen Colston

Verity George

Julie Steele

Bluebeard's Wives

Tim Raby

Jon Sperry

Taunting Men

Isobel Dryburgh

Harina Haare



Sounds and echoes: Holly Hunter as Ada and Anna Paquin as Flora

burst through to make the painful and traumatic trek into the film's dark, gnarled woods, finally to be released in the watery death/birth of an ending. Moving pictures indeed.

A film about silence and expression beyond language, *The Piano* resonates with the silences embedded deep in the texts of such 19th-century women writers as Emily Brontë or Emily Dickinson, women who hid scraps of their work under blotters, who hid themselves behind pseudonyms. They, like the strident composer Ada, were told that their creations were most irregular. In *The Piano*, Jane Campion feels her way around those echoing caves upon which they built their haunted houses of fiction. It is a virtuoso interpretation of that literary sensibility in a cinematic form, truer than any doggedly faithful adaptation of, say, *Wuthering Heights*. Indeed, *The Piano* puts us in the grip of the repressions of the 19th century – an era which saw polite society sheathing the ankles of piano legs with special socks in case they gave young men ideas. Such is the erotic object at the heart of the film.

Campion is playful with the period's more bizarre neuroses. The film flashes with moments of indignant humour, such as when Flora is ordered to whitewash some trees after she and her young friends are caught rubbing up against them in a playful – and unwitting – imitation of the sexual act. But Campion is careful not to let the comedy take hold. Under less

thoughtful direction Stewart could have been the buffoonish patriarch, hauling his white man's burden behind him. He treats the Maoris like children, paying them in buttons and staking out his territory over their sacred burial grounds. After the shocking punishment he metes out to Ada, he informs her, "I only clipped your wings." He is, as one Maori dubs him, an emotionally shrivelled "old dry balls". Yet this awful paterfamilias is invested with some sympathy. He is a confused man, who attempts to guy his world down in the chaos of change, who wants his music – and his sex – played to a strict time, so fearful is he of the other rhythms that might move him. If only he could listen, like Ada's previous lover and the father of Flora, upon whom she could "lay thoughts on his mind like a sheet". It is the communication of the gentle caress, the smoothing of nimble fingers over sheets and scales.

Conventional language imprisons Ada like the crinoline, which ambiguously also marks out her private, silent space (the skirt provides an intimate tent for Ada and Flora to shelter in the beach). Crucially, it is the written word that finally betrays her as she sends her love note to Baines, who cannot read but who knows the languages of those around him. Her arrangement with Baines has previously been based on a sensuous play of touch, smell and sound.

Bodies become instruments of ex-

pression, while the piano smelling of scent and salt becomes corporeal. Baines' massaging of Ada's leg through a hole in her black worsted stocking is given the same erotic charge as her fingering of the scales. After such libidinous exchange, the marking down of her feelings for him with words only brings destruction, which is hastened by Flora, Ada's little echoing mouthpiece (who is also the most compulsive and intriguing of fabulists).

What to make, then, of Ada's sudden plunge after her lifeless piano, which can no longer sing, into the watery grave? Ada's bid to enter into the order of language brings only death. Her will moves her finally to wave, not drown, to take life.

But there is the disquieting shadow of death cast on to the coda of the film. Brighter than in any of the previous scenes, she is seen in mourning grey, her head covered in a black-edged veil, tapping out notes with the silver artificial finger, which now marks her as the town freak. She is learning to speak but her voice rings the knell – "death, death, death". At night she dreams of her husk, anchored to the piano, skirts billowing out like a balloon, floating in the silence of the deep, deep sea. Impossible to shake off, it is the final image in a film that weighs heavy on the heart and mind, that drags us down into our own shuddering silence.

Lizzie Francke

The Real McCoy

USA 1993

Director: Russell Mulcahy

Certificate	Make-up Artists
12	Harriette Landau
Distributor	Jack Freeman
Guild	Titles/Opticals
Production Company	Howard A.
Capella International	Anderson Co.
Executive Producers	Supervising Sound Editor
Ortwin Freymuth	Martin Maryska
William Davies	Sound Editors
William Osborne	John T. Benson
Gary Levinsohn	Jeff Clark
Producers	Sukey Fontelieu
Martin Bregman	Supervising ADR Editor
Willi Baer	Julia Evershade
Michael S. Bregman	ADR Editor
Co-producer	Sukey Fontelieu
Louis A. Stroller	Foley Editors
Associate Producer	Christopher Flick
Allan Wertheim	Don Sylvester
Production Co-ordinator	Sound Recordists
Katie Willard Troeb	Mary H. Ellis
Unit Production Manager	Patricio Libenson
Allan Wertheim	Music: Tim Boyle
Location Manager	Dolby stereo
Mike Riley	Sound Re-recordists
Post-production	Chris Jenkins
Supervisor	Doug Hemphill
Michael Klawitter	Mark Smith
Casting	Foley Artists
Mary Colquhoun	John Roesch
Atlanta:	Alicia Stevenson
Shay Griffin	Stunt Co-ordinator
ADR Voice:	Dick Ziker
Barbara Harris	Stunts
Assistant Directors	Tracy Keesh-Dashnaw
Joel Tuber	Anderson Martin
Bruce Franklin	Nicholas Patrick
Screenplay	Dashnaw
William Davies	Frank Ferrara
William Osborne	Steve Borders
Director of Photography	Jeff Dashnaw
Denis Crossan	Bo Gray
Colour	Tom Harper
Eastman Color	Lonnie Smith
Camera Operator/	David Christian
Steadicam Operator	Fletcher
Neal Norton	Animal Trainers
Video Playback	Dog:
Greg Morse	Southern Animal
Special Visual Effects	Talent
Matte World	Senia Phillips
Computer Graphics	Tiger:
Joe Torre	Cinema Animal Talent
Editor	Dave Meeks
Peter Honess	Tim Seegars
Production Designer	David Johnson
Kim Colefax	Helicopter Pilot/Aerial
Art Director	Co-ordinator
Paul Huggins	Cress Horne
Set Design	
Jonathon Short	Cast
Set Decorator	Kim Basinger
Richard Charles	Karen McCoy
Greenbaum	Vai Klimer
Set Dressers	J.T. Barker
Rex Farmer	Terence Stamp
Mel Ramsey	Jack Schmidt
Scenic Charge	Gaillard Sartain
Steve Kerlagon	Gary Buckner
Scenics	Zach English
Larry C. Shepard	Patrick
Emilio Biasucci	Raynor Scheime
Tommy Cochran	Baker
Anne Holifield	Deborah Hobart
Special Effects	Cheryl Sweeney
Co-ordinator	Pamela Stubbart
Bob Shelley	Kelly
Laser Lighting Effects	Andy Stahl
Peachtree Laser	Mr Kroll
Animatronics Effects	Dean Rader-Duval
Timothy Dolph	Lewis
Music	Norman Max Maxwell
Brad Fiedel	Hoke
Additional:	Marc Macaulay
Ole Georg	Karl
Music Director	Peter Turner
Shirley Walker	David Dwyer
Orchestrations	Frank Roberts
Brad Fiedel	Guards
Music Supervisor	Robert Glover
Jellybean	Claude File
Music Editor	Prison Guards
Allan K. Rosen	David Hart
Costume Design	Businessman
Donna O'Neal	Henry Stram
Wardrobe Supervisor	Cashier
Shari Gray	Larry Black
	Parole Officer

Rebecca Wackler
Personnel Woman
Saundra Franks
Waitress
Rebecca Koon
Beautician
Stephanie Astalos-Jones
Woman at Laundry
Jack Wilkes
Accountant
Tom Egan
Salesperson
Jill Jane Clements
Lawyer
Al Hamacher
Mr Katanich
Edith Ivey
Neighbour
Eric Ware
Bank Guard
Alex Van
Radly
Joe Washington
Newscaster
Polly W. Le Porte
Stewardess
Bill Crabb
Dispatcher
Megan Hughes
Schmidt's Girlfriend

Seneca W. Foote
Old Timer
Lois Hanevold
Convenience Store
Customer
W. Clifford Klenk
Maitre d'
Nick Searcy
Roy Sweeney
Afemo Ouilami
Cab Dispatcher

9,430 feet
105 minutes

Karen McCoy, a cat burglar, bungles a bank robbery and is imprisoned. Six years later, released early on probation, she returns home wishing only to go straight and be united with her young son Patrick. Her ex-husband, however, has a new partner and has told Patrick that his mother is dead; he refuses to let Karen see the boy. Out shopping one evening, Karen witnesses a drugstore hold-up that goes wrong and from which the thief narrowly escapes with his life.

Karen finds her search for employment hampered by her criminal record. On leaving the police station after an appointment with her obnoxious probation officer, she is pointed out to J.T. Barker, the crook from the drugstore, who is in awe of her reputation and approaches her. Karen turns down his suggestion that they work together but later accepts his help in finding lodgings. J.T. informs Jack Schmidt, the local gangland baron, that Karen has been released and Schmidt, planning an \$18 million raid on the same bank that Karen had tried to rob, wants her expertise for the job.

Karen's probation officer is in league with Schmidt and leads her to a meeting with him. She refuses to work with him on the grounds that it was he who betrayed her on the former job. When Schmidt has Patrick kidnapped, Karen attempts to rescue him and is assaulted in the process; she is finally forced to collaborate. After meticulous preparation, and with J.T. as driver, the bank raid is undertaken. The team reaches the main vault where Karen suddenly traps and imprisons Schmidt and his henchmen, escaping with J.T. Returning to Schmidt's mansion, they rescue Patrick and flee to the airport to fly to Mexico. However, Karen's ex-husband is waiting for her and attempts to rob her of the money. J.T. overpowers him and together they make the plane. At the last minute, a police vehicle halts the take-off and Karen believes that she is about to be re-arrested. It transpires that it is only an emergency delivery of a transplant organ for transportation.

Karen, J.T. and Patrick, with \$3 million dollars stolen from Schmidt's safe, take off to Mexico.

"You kept your figure!" After she expensively extricated herself from the Jennifer Lynch contract that would have butchered and boxed her as Helena, the exclamation that greets Kim Basinger's cat burglar on her release from prison is tinged with more than a little irony. Given, also, that Basinger's body is resolutely undisplayed here, one realises that the star has relinquished her former territory to negotiate the transition to character actress. Part of the pleasure of *The Real McCoy* lies in precisely this negotiation and the way in which it archly puts a spin on the former Basinger persona by withholding the flesh and foregrounding the face.

There are plenty of insurance policies written into the film to avoid over-taxing either Basinger's technical resources or the spectator's credulity at her transition. Russell Mulcahy hardly makes Bergmanesque demands of his lead and surrounds her with a troupe of secondary characters that – save Val Kilmer's charming J.T. – barely develops beyond the two-dimensionally venal.

In addition, the generic vehicle is a sharply handled, updated hybrid of the caper movie, which guarantees procedural detail and the display of expertise; Mulcahy, having cut his teeth on advertising and promo-video production, brings this aesthetic to bear on such moments with varying degrees of success. The climactic robbery scene – sex, here, is thoroughly sublimated into crime, the only penetration to take place being that of the bank vault – allows the director to light the hi-tech tools of the trade with an ad-man's palate of fetishising Beineix blues and golds. Elsewhere, however, when it is the characters rather than the colours that count, the aesthetic reveals its shortcomings. For example, Karen at her desktop computer planning the raid becomes a Coke-ad cameo of expertise casually displayed in a coded shorthand of spectacles, spreadsheets and creatively dishevelled clothing.

However, there are moments that transcend such visual clichés. The relationship between Karen and her incompetent admirer J.T. develops nicely around their shared concern for her kidnapped young son who is unaware that she is his mother. "But I'd be proud to call you my mother," J.T. tells Karen, articulating the shades of hesitancy, naivety and gentle perversity that makes the pair pleasing partners in crime. Equally, the fact that the film handles its two narrative twists – Karen's incarceration of Schmidt and the last-minute arrival of the police – with barely a screech of gears attests not only to an efficient script and direction but also to the fact that Basinger and Kilmer are sufficiently sympathetic to take the viewer with them through an enjoyable and, at times, surprising film.

Chris Darke

The Secret Garden

USA 1993

Director: Agnieszka Holland

Certificate
U

Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
American Zoetrope
production for
Warner Bros
Executive Producer
Francis Ford Coppola

Producers
Fred Fuchs
Fred Roos
Tom Luddy
Associate Producer
Caroline Thompson
Production Supervisor
Roy Button

Production Co-ordinator
Judi Bunn

Location Managers
Nick Daubeny
Kevin De La Noy

Post-production
Supervisors
Karen Snizik Alvarez
Joanne Grant

Casting
Karen Lindsay-Stewart

USA:
Linda Phillips-Palo

Assistant Directors
David Brown
Peter Heslop

Screenplay
Caroline Thompson
Based on the book
by Frances Hodgson
Burnett

Director of Photography
Roger Deakins

Colour
Technicolor

Additional Photography
Jerzy Zielinski

Dick Pope

Steadicam Operator
Peter Cavaciuti

Wildlife Photography
Andrew Anderson

Visual Effects Consultant
Mike Richards

Visual Effects Supervisor
Robin Browne

Matte Painting
Illusion Arts

Editor
Isabelle Lorente

Production Designer
Stuart Craig

Supervising Art Director
John King

Art Director
Peter Russell

Set Decorator
Stephanie McMillan

Special Effects Supervisor
John Evans

Special Effects
Barry Whitrod

Michael Dunleavy
Digby Milner

Peter Dawson
Peter Pickering

Simon Hewitt

Music
Zbigniew Preisner

Music Director
Wojciech Michniewski

Music Performed by
Sinfonia Varsovia

Vocals:
Boys Choir of
the Cracovian
Philharmonic

Music Consultant
Curt Sobel

Song
"Winter Light" by
Zbigniew Preisner,
Linda Ronstadt, Eric
Kaz, performed by
Linda Ronstadt

Costume Design
Marit Allen

Wardrobe Supervisor
Kenny Crouch

Make-up
Chief:
Jenny Shircore

Artist:
Robert McCann

Title Design
Nina Saxon

Film Design
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor
Jennifer Lee Ware

Sound Editors
E. Jeane Putnam
Pat Jackson

ADR Editor
Marilyn McCoppen

Foley Editor
Malcolm Fife

Sound Recordists
Drew Kunin

Music:
Rafat Paczkowski

Foley Recordist
Michael Semanick

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Leslie Shatz

Lora Hirschberg

Sound Effects Editors
Jim McKee

Laurie Bernard

Foley Artists
Maggie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers

Technical Supervisor
Kim Aubry

Cast
Kate Maberly

Mary Lennox

Haydon Prosser

Colin Craven

Andrew Knott

Dickon

Maggie Smith

Mrs Medlock

Laura Crossley

Martha

John Lynch

Lord Craven

Walter Sparrow

Ben Weatherstaff

Irene Jacob

Mary's Mother/
Lilias Craven

Frank Baker

Government Official

Valerie Hill

Cook

Andros Pickering

Betty Butterworth

Peter Morston

Will

Arthur Sprockley

John

Colin Bruce

Major Lennox

Parsan Singh

Ayah

Eileen Page

Grandmother at Dock

David Stoll

Grandfather at Dock

Tahatha Allen

Girl at Dock

9124 feet

101 minutes

The 1900s. Mary Lennox lives with her parents in India. After an earthquake in which her parents are killed, she is sent to England to stay with her uncle, Lord Craven, at Misselthwaite Manor. At Liverpool dock she is met by her uncle's housekeeper Mrs Medlock, who tells her that Mary's mother had a twin sister, who is also dead. At the gloomy manor, Mary is left to amuse herself. The young maid Martha attempts to befriend the aloof child, but Mary prefers to explore the house and surrounding landscape on her own.

Out in the grounds, she discovers a walled garden. A friendly robin shows her the way to its locked door. Mary rummages through her dead aunt's room and finds the key to this door. Later, Mary returns to the garden and meets Dickon, Martha's younger brother. He explains to her that her aunt died falling off the garden swing, and that consequently Lord Craven ordered the garden to be sealed up. In the house, Mary hears a moaning sound and is told that it is the wind. Left to herself, Mary discovers the source of the noise, a young invalid boy in one of the rooms; he is Colin, Lord Craven's son. He explains that he is seriously ill. Meanwhile, Mary and Dickon tend to the garden and plant it for the spring. Mary also secretly visits Colin in his room. One day she is playing with Colin when Mrs Medlock turns up. Mary has to hide, though she is later discovered by Martha. Martha tells Mary that Lord Craven is coming home. Mary is at last presented to her uncle who is shocked by her resemblance to his wife. Lord Craven is kindly but distant and soon returns to his travels.

When spring comes, the secret garden blooms. Mary and Dickon visit Colin and tear down the shutters on his bedroom window, to Colin's horror. He throws a tantrum, and Mary tells him to shut up. Medlock discovers that the children have been playing together and scolds Martha. Colin decides to get up and bosses the servants around. He is taken by Mary and Dickon in a wheelchair to visit the garden; Mary encourages him to try to walk. During the summer, he grows in strength. Mrs Medlock is convinced that Colin is still not well and continues with his treatments, confining him to his room and putting Mary under lock and key. Mary finds a secret passage leading from her room to the gardens. She makes a wish that Lord Craven will come home, and magically, he decides to return. Finding Colin no longer in his room, Lord Craven goes straight to the garden and finds the children playing hide and seek. He is reunited with his son, but Mary runs off, reminded of her own loneliness. Dickon comforts her, and for the first time Mary is able to mourn the death of her parents. Lord Craven reminds Mary that she is part of the family, as Dickon looks on.

Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *The Secret Garden* was published in



Growing pains: Heydon Prowse, Kate Maberly and Andrew Knott

1911, the same year as J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, and also the third edition of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. Indeed, as with *Peter Pan*, there is much more to Burnett's novel than the 'children's classic' tag allows. Another Neverland, the secret garden – a phrase now ripe with sexual connotation – is a landscape upon which the most adult of anxieties can be mapped out. Children on the verge of adolescence losing parents are the staple narrative of the fairy story. Here the story resolves with the finding of a real father, while the mother is manifest as a garden (one thinks of Marvell's "vegetable love").

Given this, it is appropriate that the director Agnieszka Holland and the writer Caroline Thompson should be hired by Coppola's American Zoetrope to rake over the text as part of the children's classics series which started with Carroll Ballard's *The Black Stallion*. Holland's tale of a cuckoo in the nest, *Olivier, Olivier* was a well-aimed crack at the family romance. Thompson, who wrote *Edward Scissorhands* and *The Addams Family*, knows a thing or two about the cobwebbed corners of the imagination: *The Secret Garden* would seem a perfect project for someone who has stated that her two major cinematic influences are *The Black Stallion* and *Carrie*.

The fact that Holland, a Pole, and Thompson, an American, are alien to the English experience is also germane. Though born in England, Burnett went to live in the US as a child. The England of *The Secret Garden*, as epitomised in the mouldy old manor with its fleet of servants, is the invention of a woman who spent her formative years in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Sex and class with a bit of colonialism thrown in – a heady brew for a family film. Indeed, this story of a young lady from the manor crossing the boundaries and befriending the gardening lad is worthy of D.H.

Lawrence. But what is disappointing is that Holland and Thompson, who are obviously not timid of probing the shady side, have been more cautious than an adult might hope for, yet at the same time have created a film that the contemporary children's audience might find not to their taste (with no dinosaurs, turtles or any other opportunities for McDonald's tie-ins, it is hard to see how it will be marketed to them).

Two significant discrepancies between book and film mark the tenor of the project from the beginning. In Burnett's version, Mary's parents die of cholera. There is a vivid account of her left alone in a house full of yellowing death, the only other living thing there being a snake. An earthquake might have more dramatic value, but it seems to provide a more sanitised account of the trauma of separation between child and parent. There is no sense of sickness. The colour yellow manifests itself instead in the golden light that drenches the Indian scenes. This seems to have no other symbolic value other than allowing for a bold contrast with the classically English bleak and rain-swept landscape that prove so foreboding when Mary first arrives in her new country. England was never darker, and Misselthwaite Manor has been art-directed to Gothic perfection.

Meanwhile, Burnett's Mr Craven has been upgraded to the status of a lord. This upwardly mobile move does give a certain resonance to Colin's enfeeblement. Here is a sickly child, terrified of following in his father's line (Lord Craven is a hunchback). He is cosseted and protected from the 'spores' in the air, which might just be the smoke churned out from the factories and mills beyond the moors; but in fact the source of infection is perceived as coming from the servants, who all wear white linen masks over their mouths when dealing with the young master.

When Colin finally comes downstairs, the full complement of masked servants line up to greet him. If this all seems ripely farcical, Holland undercuts any ironic intention in a later scene in which the servants smile and wave from a window at the now walking Colin, happy at his new fortune. See how the aristocracy thrives.

But conversely the servants are associated with all that is naturally healthy. The kitchen scenes are brightly lit, bustling with rosy-cheeked activity, making a glaring contrast with the gloomy upstairs. Only Mrs Medlock is charmlessly brusque (Maggie Smith on the right side of caricature), but then house-keepers inhabit the miserable limbo between upstairs and downstairs. Proper servants like Martha melt with heart-cheering goodness, while Dickon is the pastoral boy, trailing with him a menagerie of deer, rabbits, robins and other cute wildlife. With the help of Dickon's green fingers, Mary is able to bring her garden back to life, rousing mother nature (she finds the key in her other mother's bedroom).

The film blossoms with stop-frame shots of roots thrusting and flowers burgeoning. The magic of the organic marks an emotionally regenerative process for Mary, and allows her finally to mourn her lost parents and fall a little in love with Dickon. Likewise, Colin is restored to health. But the cultivation of the garden also marks a return to a familiar old order, despite Mrs Medlock's contention that Mary has created havoc. Lord Craven arrives at the manor to take his place as father, Mary and Colin are tentatively aligned (earlier Colin had expressed a desire to marry her), while Dickon is expelled from this new-found paradise and is last seen out on the wild moors. From this, it would seem that the servant class has sown the seeds of their own destruction.

Lizzie Francke

So I Married an Axe Murderer

USA 1993

Director: Thomas Schlamme

Certificate

12

Distributor

Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Fried/Woods Films
For TriStar Pictures

Executive Producer

Danny Williams

Producers

Robert N. Fried

Cary Woods

Co-producer

Jana Sue Memel

Associate Producer

Michelle Wright

Production Co-ordinator

Blair Judson

Unit Production Manager

Bernie Williams

Location Managers

Gail Stempler

Laurie Noll

Ellen Winchell

Post-production Supervisor

John A. Amicarella

2nd Unit Director

Bud Davis

Costing

Mindy Marin

Associate Los Angeles:

Allison Bauer

San Francisco:

Davia Nelson

Assistant Directors

Amy Sayres

Douglas S. Ornstein

Eric Tignini

Screenplay

Robbie Fox

Director of Photography

Julio Macat

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operators

Kim Marks

Helicopter:

Stan McLain

24 Frame Video

Marty Brenneis

Visual Effects

Sony Pictures

Imageworks:

Supervisors

John Nelson

Tim McGovern

Producers:

George Merkert

Bill Birrell

Animation:

Mark Sorell

Andrea Sholer

David Douglas

Editor:

Ladd McPartland

Co-ordinator:

Gayle Reznik

Editors

Richard Halsey

Colleen Halsey

Production Designer

John Graysmark

Art Department

Kirsten Harwood

Art Director

Michael Rizzo

Set Design

Barbara Mesney

Set Decorators

Peg Cummings

Jim Poynter

Production Illustrator

Mentor Huebner

Head Scenic Artist

Elizabeth Hamilton

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Thomas F. Sindich

Special Effects

Dennis Becker

I.J. Van Perre

Peter Stoltz

Puppeteers

Pat Brymer

Allan Trautman

Music

Bruce Broughton

Orchestrations

Donald Nemitz

Music Supervisor

Danny Williams

Music Editor

Alex Gibson

Songs

"There She Goes" by

L.A. Mavers, performed

by 1) The Boo Radleys,

2) The Las; "Saturday

Night" by Bill Martin,

Phil Coulter,

performed by 1) Bay

City Rollers, 2) Ned's

Atomic Dustbin; "The

Most Beautiful Girl"

by Rory Bourke, Billy

Sherrill, Norris Wilson;

"You're In My Heart"

by Rod Stewart; "Rush"

by Mick Jones,

performed by Big

Audio Dynamite;

"Two Princes" by and

performed by The Spin

Doctors; "Insatiable

One" by B. Anderson,

B. Butler, performed

by Suede; "Long Day

In The Universe" by

Harley Farr, Chris

McDonagh, Andrea

Lewis, Paul Watkins,

performed by The

Darling Buds; "Starve

To Death" by and

performed by Chris

Whitley; "Stand By

Your Man" by Billy

Sherrill, Tammy

Wynette; "Maybe Baby"

by Joan Jones, David

Russo, performed by

Sun-60; "The Break"

by Dave Pirner,

performed by Soul

Asylum; "This Poem

Sucks" by and

performed by Mike

Myers, David Knowles,

Carl Rusk, Paul

Sanchez; "A Touch

of Gaelic" by and

performed by Ron

Gonnella; "Do Ya Think

I'm Sexy" by Rod

Stewart, Carmine

Appice, Duane

Hitchings; "Only You"

by Buck Ram, Ande

Rand; "Brother" by

Glen Phillips, Toad,

performed by Toad The

Wet Sprocket

Choreography

Michael Smuin

Kimi Okata

Costume Design

Kimberly Tillman

Wardrobe Supervisor

Ed Fincher

Make-up Artists

Key:

Matthew W. Mungle

Deborah LaMia

Denver

Courtney Carell

Special Make-up

Matthew W. Mungle

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor

Larry Mann

Sound Editors

Bob O'Brien

Don S. Walden

John O. Wilde

Gary Mundheim

Noah Blough

Mark Gordon

Michael Dobie

Supervising ADR Editor

Uncle Jay Kamen

ADR Editor

Scott Burrow

Sound Recordists

Nelson Stoll

Music:

Armin Steiner

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

John J. Stephens

B. Tennyson

Sebastian II

Sergio Reyes

Stunt Co-ordinator

Bud Davis

Stunts

Hannah Kozak

Bernie Pock

Cost

Mike Myers

Charlie Mackenzie

Stuart Mackenzie

Nancy Travis

Harriet Michaels

Anthony LaPaglia

Tony Giardino

Amenda Plummer

Rose Michaels

Brenda Fricker

May Mackenzie

Matt Doherty

Heed

Charles Grodin

Commandeered

Car Driver

Phil Hartman

Park Ranger, Vickie

Debi Mazar

Tony's Girlfriend,

Susan

Steven Wright

Pilot

Patrick Bristow

Cafe Roads Performer

Citra Wilson

Cafe Roads MC

Al Nathandian

George Maurice

Kiki Doveas

Lillie Lowe

Maria Dos Remedios

Butchershop

Customers

Luennell Campbell

Police Records Officer

Kelly Christman

Policeman

Rya Brodsky

Eugene Bulch

Russian Sailors

Maureen O'Boyle

"A Current Affair"

Anchorwoman

Steve Dunbar

"A Current Affair"

Reporter

Michael G. Hagerly

Michael Richards

Obituary Employees

Adele Proom

Marriage Desk

Employee

David Knowles

Carl Rusk

Paul Sanchez

Serenade Musicians

Jessie Nelson

Ralph

Wanda McCadden

Auntie Molly

Glen Vernon

Uncle Angus

Maggie Myers Davidson

Tony's Dance Partner

Robert Nichols

Scottish Minister

Jak Cunningham

Wedding Reception

Piper

Robert Black

Wedding Reception

Accordianist

John Taylor

Wedding Receptionist

Fiddler

Ken Johnson

Walter the Plumber

Kelvin Han Yee

Master Cho

Joe Bellan

Man with Bimbo

Greg Gernann

Desk Clerk

Kenneth Grantham

Maitre d'

Bob Sarlatte

M.C.

Cynthia Frost

Mrs Levenstein

Prod Ornstein

Mr Levenstein

John X. Heart

Waiter

Frederick Walsh

Bellboy

Keith Selvin

Young Stuart

8,307 feet

92 minutes



High anxiety: Mike Myers and Harriet Michaels on their happy day

traz, and Tony warns him not to keep looking for excuses to fail. Charlie invites Harriet to his parents' home. In the loo, he reads the paper again, and starts to get suspicious. He asks Tony to run a check on the missing husbands; they turn out to be real cases, and dates and locations tally with several things Harriet has said. Then the plumber's body turns up; terrified, Charlie breaks up with Harriet.

When someone confesses to the plumber's murder, Charlie realises he must win Harriet back. He performs a "poem that sucks" outside her window and invites her to his parents' wedding anniversary party, where he proposes marriage and she accepts. After the ceremony, Harriet sings "Only You", which Charlie knows was the lounge singer's wife's favourite song. Shrugging off his paranoia, Charlie drives his new wife to a country hotel - Poet's Corner - for their honeymoon. Meanwhile, Tony discovers that the murder suspect is a phoney. He faxes Harriet's picture to the relatives of each missing husband and they all confirm that Harriet was the bride. Tony calls Charlie to tell him, just as the hotel staff are about to carry off the couple to the honeymoon suite. Charlie manages to lock up the bewildered Harriet, but then discovers that the woman who wields the axe is actually her sister Rose. She chases Charlie on to the roof just as Tony arrives to arrest Harriet. After a struggle, Rose slips off the roof but Charlie grasps her hand and she is rescued. Later, at Henry's, Charlie performs a poem dedicated to Harriet.

Being a bouncy comic on a sofa and aping his audience's amiably gormless lifestyle has been a winning formula for Mike Myers. *Wayne's World* bridged the gap between success in the living room and success in the cinema by shamelessly flaunting its small-scale origins ("We are not worthy," it

pleaded) and tagging itself to the reflected glory of other artists' personas, from Freddy Mercury to Rob Lowe (not to mention Bill and Ted). For his follow-up feature, Myers has chosen a persona which is definitely not of his audience: a wide-eyed beat poet with a penchant for female butchers.

Myers has here gone Hollywood in the most ambitious way. As Charlie, he's both comic and straight man in one. He's as pathetic as a gonk, yet he drives a groovy 60s car and wears cool clothes. He's both goofy and cute, accident-prone and capable of attracting the most fabulous women. Suddenly he wants to be Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis in one slick package. As if that weren't biting off more than one performer has a right to chew, he's also cast himself as the hero of a Hitchcock spoof, a challenge that has defeated many a better comic before him. Most of the time he loses his grip but something about the sheer silliness of his comedy, just a shade short of Lewis's sentimental vulnerability, affords occasional soft-headed laughs.

Where Myers finally over-reaches himself is as Charlie's Scottish father, a character out of a rejected Billy Connolly sketch. He gives Rod Stewart songs the Jimmy Shand treatment and has lines such as "Kiss your mother or I'll tear your lungs out". Much better are comic foils such as the police captain who's such a nice guy that Tony has to coach him in how to yell at his men, or the park ranger who relishes the morbidity of Alcatraz. Many of the better ideas that fill out the background here are rooted in TV sketch work. It's possible therefore that Myers' gag writers are not yet thinking as big or as bouncy as their mouthpiece. Nevertheless, it's a relief to watch a spoof that's confident enough not to carpet-bomb you relentlessly with puns and schoolboy pranks.

Nick James

Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Three Colours: Blue)

France 1993

Director: Krzysztof Kieslowski

Certificates

15

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

MK2 Productions SA

(Paris)/CED

Productions (Paris)/

France 3 Cinema

(Paris)/CAB

Productions

(Lausanne)/TOR

Production (Warsaw)

With the participation

of Canal Plus/Centre

National de la

Cinematographie

Supported by the

Fonds Eurimages of the

Conseil de l'Europe

Producer

Marin Karmitz

Production Manager

Yvon Grenn

Casting

Margot Capelier

Assistant Director

Emmanuel Finkiel

Screenplay

Krzysztof Piesiewicz

Krzysztof Kieslowski

Screenplay Collaborators

Agnieszka Holland

Edward Zebrowski

Slawomir Idziak

Director of Photography

Slawomir Idziak

In colour

Editor

Jacques Witte

Set Design

Claude Lenoir

Set Decorators

Marie-Claire Quin

Jean-Pierre Delette

Christian Aubenque

Julien Poirot-Weber

Lionel Acat

Music

Zbigniew Preisner

Conductor

Wojciech

Michniewski

Music Performed by

Sinfonia Varsovia

Philharmonic Choir of

Silesia

Soprano:

Elzbieta Towarnicka

Flute:

Jacek Ostaszewski

Piano:

Konrad Mastlylo

Music Producer

Halina Laciak

Costume Design

Virginie Viard

Naima Lagrange

Make-up Artists

Valerie Tranier

Jean-Pierre Caminade

Sound Editors

Claire Bez

Bertrand Lanclos

Jean-Claude Laureux

Sound Recordists

Jean-Claude Laureux

Brigitte Taillandier

Pascal Colomb

Music:

Rafal Paczkowski

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

William Flageollet

Jean-Pierre Lelong

Mario Melchiorri

Vincent Arnardi

Cast

Juliette Binoche

Julie

Benoit Ristant

Olivier

Florence Pernel

Sandrine

Charlotte Véry

Lucille

Méline Vincent

Journalist

Philippe Volter

Estate Agent

Claude Duneton

Doctor

Hugues Quester

Patrice

Emmanuelle Riva

Mother

Florence Vignon

Copyist

Jacek Ostaszewski

Flautist

Yann Tregouet

Antoine

Isabelle Sadoyan

Servant

Daniel Martin

Downstairs Neighbour

Catherine Thérvenne

Neighbour

Alain Olivier

Lawyer

Pierre Fergat

Gardener

Philippe Manesse

Idit Cebula

Jacques Desses

Yves Penay

Arno Chervier

Stanislas Nordoy

Michel Lisowski

Philippe Morier-Genoud

Julie Delpy

Zbigniew Zamachowski

Alain Decaux

8,809 feet

98 minutes

Subtitles

Julie, a young French woman, loses her husband and child when the family car careers out of control on a remote country lane and crashes into a tree. Badly injured in the accident, she tries to commit suicide on waking up in a hospital bed, but her attempt is thwarted by a vigilant nurse.

At the time of his death, Julie's husband Patrice, a famous composer, had been working on a piece of music to be performed simultaneously by 12 different orchestras in all the EC capitals.

While Julie is convalescing in the hospital, a journalist visits her, asking if she will finish the piece herself, and enquiring whether the rumour is true that she wrote all of Patrice's music; Julie refuses to answer. Discharged from the hospital, she returns to the family château, sorts through her belongings, and instructs her lawyer to sell everything. She even destroys Patrice's remaining work. After spending one night with Olivier, a composer friend, she tells him to forget about her. Hiring an anonymous apartment in Paris, she tries to build a new life, away from her past acquaintances and music. She makes occasional visits to her elderly mother, who is living in a nursing home. Otherwise, her time is spent in a daze, as she swims, potters round her flat and grieves. Her one new friend is her neighbour Sandrine, a prostitute whom the other neighbours want to evict. Julie refuses to sign their petition, and Sandrine is allowed to stay.

One night, she receives a call from Sandrine, who had been performing in a striptease joint, and had spotted her father in the audience. As she is consoling Sandrine at the club, she notices her own photo is on television, in a programme about Patrice. Interviewed by the journalist who harassed Patrice in the hospital, Olivier admits he has been commissioned to finish the piece. Julie is amazed that any of the score has survived, and alarmed by pictures showing Patrice with another woman. She searches out Olivier and offers to help him. She also quizzes him about the "other women" and learns that he had been unfaithful for years. Julie tracks down Patrice's mistress, a successful lawyer, eventually confronting her in a restaurant cloakroom. The mistress claims Patrice loved her. Julie accepts this, but is shocked to discover the lawyer is pregnant with Patrice's baby.

Having completed the score, Julie offers it to Olivier. He refuses to accept it, saying he can't take credit for her work. Julie resumes her relationship with him. Learning the château has not yet been sold, she moves back in herself, and begins to make provisions for the lawyer's baby. The lawyer is not surprised by her decision, saying Patrice had always emphasised she was an honourable woman.

After the privations endured by the saints and sinners of Kieślowski's Polish *Dekalog*, where moral choices had to be balanced against political and economic necessity, and where austerity was the watchword, life – at least in material terms – has become very much easier for the protagonists of *Trois Couleurs: Bleu*. The first part of a trilogy, with each film taking as its starting point one of the shades of the tricolour, *Bleu*'s ostensible theme is liberty (equality and fraternity, white and red, are to be its sequels).

It is not freedom of choice or expression that concerns the director here, but a rather more abstract notion of individual freedom. Although the pic-

ture is nominally inspired by one of the great revolutionary symbols, Kieślowski and his scriptwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz are singularly uninterested in invoking the spirits of Danton and Robespierre. Their 'unpolitical', almost Proustian project is to consider how far individuals are able to detach themselves from family, memory and material objects, the very things which give most lives a definition.

The film is seen entirely from the perspective of a recently bereaved woman who, in her grief, tries to sever all links with the past. Our first sight of her, a huge close-up of the side of her face, emphasises this is to be her story. Slowly, she flickers into consciousness. Refracted on her iris as she lies in her hospital bed is the image of the doctor, telling her she has lost her husband and child in the car crash. We are seeing through her eye.

What has been described as Kieślowski's "luminous, numinous and ominous" visual style is much in evidence. As in *The Double Life of Véronique*, reasonably familiar landscapes – French countryside, Parisian city scenes – are given an eerie, uncanny quality. Fields are draped in mist, streets are labyrinthine, and there is the same vertiginous sense of time distorted. It is never really clear whether the story takes place over days, weeks or months. Any narrative progression is haphazard, occurring through chance or coincidence. In a café, Julie just happens to hear a street busker playing snatches of her husband's last, uncompleted work on his flute. She just happens to catch a glimpse of herself on television. She just happens to find out about her husband's mistress.

The only common thread linking

these random events is music. There are frequent, highly stylised moments of near-epiphany when the action freezes as Julie experiences some pang of involuntary memory, and the music blasts out on the soundtrack. At first, she seems overly obsessed with the myth of her husband's genius, and there is a danger the film will become bogged down in a ponderous elegy for the dead composer. But *Bleu* is not so much about celebrating the 'great' man as exorcising him. It turns out that Patrice was far from the model figure she remembers; and there are constant hints that he didn't actually write the music himself. Perhaps Julie was the composer all along. Perhaps, indeed, Kieślowski is taking a sly dig at the whole cult of the auteur.

Arguably, *Bleu* follows more in the tradition of the French New Wave than of its director's Polish-based work. In particular, it echoes Godard's *Vivre sa vie*, in which Anna Karina was similarly cast adrift in the big city landscape. Not only do Binoche and Karina look remarkably alike, with identical haircuts and the same, mournful stare, but both pictures portray women struggling to live their own lives in a world where men pull the strings. And both directors seem intoxicated by their stars. Like Godard with Karina, Kieślowski risks aestheticising Julie's sense of isolation. With its swirling classical music, sumptuous production values and *la belle* Binoche at its core, there are moments when the movie seems like an upmarket brandy commercial. But it is rescued from the dead end of art-house chic by a riveting central performance and the director's always idiosyncratic eye for detail. Kieślowski manages to convey Julie's grief most

effectively through almost throwaway images. She stares in morbid fascination at a rat tending its litter; her gaze seizes on countless little objects, many of them, predictably enough, blue: under her scrutiny, these take on immense, totemic significance. Although the film veers toward the melancholy, there are moments of mordant humour, notably when we discover Patrice's dying words were nothing more profound than the punch-line to a stale joke.

In the end, *Bleu* seems anti-climactic. Julie comes in from the cold, resumes her relationship with her irritating lover, who has been pursuing her round the city like a droopy St Bernard dog. She completes her husband's score for him and makes provisions for his mistress's child. Yet, banal as this all is, the film finishes with a flourish. The music, so far heard only in staccato fragments, is finally played in full as the camera pans from Julie and her boyfriend, encased like ornaments behind a glass screen, across a series of *tableaux vivants* of the main characters featured in the film – among them Julie's elderly mother and the wide-eyed boy who witnessed the accident. It's a glorious moment, and one which testifies to Kieślowski's ability to startle us with his formal virtuosity, even as his narrative crumbles round him.

Perhaps Kieślowski is, as his supporters so ardently proclaim, the most important film-maker in Europe; but his blithe abandonment of social issues and retreat into a remote, mystical realm where personal experience is all that matters, do not augur well for the future.

Geoffrey Macnab



Remembrance of music past: Juliette Binoche as Julie

True Romance

USA 1993

Director: Tony Scott

Certificates

18

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Morgan Creek

Productions

In association with

Davis Film

Executive Producers

James G. Robinson

Gary Barber

Bob Weinstein

Harvey Weinstein

Stanley Margolis

Producers

Bill Unger

Steve Perry

Samuel Hadida

Co-producers

Don Edmonds

James W. Skotchdopole

Associate Producers

Lisa Cogswell

Spencer Franklin

Gregory S. Manson

Production Co-ordinator

Spencer Franklin

Unit Production Manager

S.H. Perry

Location Manager

Janice Polley

Post-production

Supervisor

Jody Levin

Casting

Risa Bramon Garcia

Billy Hopkins

Voice

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

James W. Skotchdopole

Carey Dietrich

Craig Pinckes

Screenplay

Quentin Tarantino

Director of Photography

Jeffrey L. Kimball

Panavision

In Colour

Camera Operators

Michael A. Genie

Gregory Lundsgaard

2nd Unit

Ray de la Motte

Leo Napolitano

Aaron Pazanti

Gregory Schmidt

Steadicam Operator

Gregory Lundsgaard

Editors

Michael Tronick

Christian Wagner

Production Designer

Benjamin Fernandez

Art Director

James J. Murakami

Set Decorator

Thomas L. Roysden

Set Dresser

Larry Boyd

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Mike McInardus

Special Effects

Robert Henderson

Larry Shorts

Musik

Hans Zimmer

Additional music:

Mark Mancina

John Van Tongeren

Musik Extracts

"Viens Maitika sous

la Dôme Edais" from

Lakme by Léo Delibes

Musik Co-ordinators

Susan Abrams

Marie Snyder

Musik Supervisor

Maureen Crowe

Musik Editor

Thomas Milano

Songs

"Gmceland" by Tonio

K., Charlie Sexton,

performed by Charlie

Sexton; "In Dreams" by

John Waite, Mark

Spiro, performed by

John Waite; "Wounded

Bird" by Eddie Chacon,

Charles Pettigrew, Josh

Deutsch, performed

by Charles W. Eddie;

"White Wedding", by

and performed by Billy

Idol; "Skinny (They

Can't Get Enough)" by

Rhonda Bush,

performed by

the Skinny Boys;

"Heartbreak Hotel" by

Mae Boren Axton,

Tommy Darden, Elvis

Presley, performed by

Val Kilmer; "I Want

Your Body" by John

Burbank, Michael

Vander Kuy, performed

by Nymphomaniac;

"A Little Bit of Tears" by

Hank Cochran,

performed by Burl Ives;

"I Need a Heart to

Come Home to" by

Russell Smith; John

Jarvis, performed by

Shelby Lynne;

"Chantilly Lace" by J.P.

Richardson, performed

by Big Bopper; "The

Other Side" by Steven

Tyler, John Vallance,

performed by

Aerosmith; "Raga

Yaman" by and

performed by Clem

Alford; "Love is the

Tender Trap" by

Sammy Cahn, James

Van Heusen,

performed by Robert

Palmer; "Outshined"

by Chris Cornell,

performed by

Soundgarden; "All the

Way" by Sammy Cahn,

James Van Heusen,

"Learnin' the Blues" by

Dolores "Vicki" Silvers,

performed by Jerry

Delmonico; "Two

Hearts" by and

performed by Chris

Isaak

Costume Design

Susan Becker

Wardrobe Supervisor

Hugo Pena

Make-up

Ellen Wong

Prosthetic Make-up Effects

Frank Carrisosa

Title Design

Nina Saxon

Film Design

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research Corp.

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert G. Henderson

Sound Editors

Bub Asman

Virginia Cook

McGowan

Samuel C. Crutcher

Greg Dillon

David M. Horton

Jayne S. Parker

Supervising ADR Editor

James Simcik

ADR Editor

William C. Carruth

Foley Editors

David L. Horton Jr

Scott A. Tinsley

Sound Recordists

William B. Kaplan

Musik:

Jay Rifkin

Dolby stereo

ADR Recordists

Charleen Richards

Greg Steele

Foley Recordist

Dorothy Wright

Sound Re-recordists

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

Foley:

Eric Gotthel

Stunt Co-ordinator

Charles Picerni

Stunts

Todd Adelman

Joni Avery

Ken Bates

Steve Boyum

Keith Campbell

Steve Hulin

Eric Mansker

Neon Orsatti

Ric Waugh

S.H. Perry

Chuck Picerni Jr

Paul Picerni

Steve Picerni

Tony Rich

Robby Robinson

Big Daddy Wayne

Nancy Young

Film Extracts

The Streetfighter (1975)

Freelack (1992)

Stay Tuned (1992)

The Mack (1972)

Cast

Christian Slater

Clarence Worley

Patricia Arquette

Alabama Whitman

Dennis Hopper

Clifford Worley

Vai Kilmer

Mentor

Gary Oldman

Drexl Spivey

Brad Pitt

Floyd (Dick's

Roommate)

Christopher Walken

Vincenzo Coccotti

Bronson Pinchot

Elliot Blitzer

Samuel L. Jackson

Big Don

Michael Rapaport

Dick Ritchie

Saul Rubinek

Lee Donowitz

Cocchotta Ferrall

Mary Louise Ravencroft

James Gandolfini

Virgil

Anna Thomson

Lucy

Victor Argo

Lenny

Paul Bates

Marty

Chris Penn

Nicky Dimes

Tom Sizemore

Cody Nicholson

Said Fara

Burger Man

Gregory Sportador

Burger Stand Customer

Maria Pilla

Kandi

Frank Adonis

Frankie

Kevin Corrigan

Marvin

Paul Bea-Victor

Luca

Michael Beach

Wuritzer

Joe D'Angario

Police Radio Operator

John Gower

Detective

John Conatempo

Squad Cop 1

Eric Allen Kramer

Boris

Patrick John Hurley

Monty

Dennis Barber

Scott Evers

Lobby Cops

Hilary Nym

Running Cop

Steve Gonzales

I.A. Officer

Laurence Mason

Floyd III

10,672 feet

119 minutes

druggy roommate Floyd, before checking into a motel.

RETROSPECTIVE

Aventure Malgache

United Kingdom 1944

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

BFI

Production Company

Phoenix

For the Ministry

of Information

Screenplay

Uncredited

Director of Photography

Günther Krampf

Black and White

Art Director

Charles Gilbert

Cast

The Mollère Players

2,962

31 minutes

French dialogue

English subtitles

London, 1944. French actors are preparing for a stage play based on the experiences of one of their number, the lawyer Clarousse, as a member of the Resistance on Vichy-controlled Madagascar. The actor playing the villain of the piece, the police chief Jean Michel, is having trouble getting into his character. To help him, Clarousse relates his story. Madagascar, 1940. In court Clarousse antagonises Michel by accusing him of corruption. When France falls and the Vichy regime takes over, Clarousse and a group of friends resolve to resist. With the tacit co-operation of the Governor, they run an escape route for those wishing to join the Free French. Michel, an avid Vichyite, suspects what's happening, but can prove nothing until the disappointed fiancée of one of the escapers denounces the lawyer. Jailed, Clarousse resists all

Stage games: *Aventure Malgache*

Michel's attempts to make him talk, though the alternative is the penal colony. But the ship taking him there is intercepted by a British warship. The freed Clarousse broadcasts anti-Vichy propaganda to Madagascar. When the British liberate the island, Michel vainly tries to switch sides. Back in London, Clarousse's colleague is now well into his role as the actors are called on stage.

Aventure Malgache and its companion piece *Bon Voyage*, were Hitchcock's contribution to the war effort. Still smarting from accusations of having "deserted his country in its hour of need", he readily accepted Sidney Bernstein's invitation to come over and make propaganda shorts for the Ministry of Information. (He also started work on a film about the concentration camps, which was never completed.) The two French shorts, planned as tributes to the Resistance, were intended for showing in the liberated areas of France. *Aventure Malgache*, though, was found insufficiently heroic – understandably so, since Hitchcock and his scriptwriter, Angus MacPhail, devised it after observing the bickering among the Free French they worked with on *Bon Voyage* – and never released.

But it's this ironic slant that makes the film watchable today, where the ringing tones of fervent propaganda would grate. Very Hitchcockian in its concern with masquerade, *Aventure Malgache* teases us not only with the cat-and-mouse games of who's really Vichy and who isn't, but with constantly shifting levels of representation. The actors in the dressing-room also play the characters we're shown in the flashback, and the story played out there is the same one they're about to enact on stage. (And just to add another level – the actor playing Clarousse was apparently the real-life Madagascan lawyer to whom these events happened.) By the end, the levels are starting to merge: the actor Michel suddenly rounds on Clarousse, denouncing him as a traitor, before recollecting himself. "Only rehearsing," he mutters sheepishly.

For all its brief running-time and slender budget, *Aventure Malgache* abounds in Hitchcockian touches. Particularly characteristic, in its sure-footed technique as in its misogyny, is the key betrayal scene. As the Resistance fighter departs, leaving his fiancée quivering with disappointment and fury, the camera pulls slowly back, bringing a telephone in the foreground into sharp focus. As if drawn by the camera movement the woman's eyes, and then her hand, move towards the instrument. There are some good sardonic jokes, too – as when the Vichy police chief, with the island falling to the Allies, thoughtfully tucks away his bottle of Vichy water and photograph of Pétain, substituting Scotch and a picture of Queen Victoria. *Aventure Malgache* may be minor Hitchcock, but it's unmistakably the authentic article.

Philip Kemp

RETROSPECTIVE

Bon Voyage

United Kingdom 1944

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

BFI

Production Company

Phoenix

For the Ministry

of Information

Screenplay

J.O.C. Orron

Angus MacPhail

Based on an original

idea by Arthur

Calder Marshall

Director of Photography

Günther Krampf

Black and White

Art Director

Charles Gilbert

Cast

John Hylton

The Mollère Players

2,333 feet

28 minutes

French dialogue

English subtitles

London, 1943. John Dougall, an airman escaped from a POW camp tells a Free French colonel how he got out of occupied France. Along with a Polish fellow-prisoner, Stefan Godowski, Dougall reaches the outskirts of Reims. Godowski goes to contact the Resistance, but returns saying he had to kill a Vichy spy who followed him. Going to hide the body, they meet two Resistance workers who give them an escape route. On a train they are contacted by Jeanne, who takes them to her father's farm. A British plane lands nearby, but since it has only one place Godowski remains behind, giving Dougall a letter to deliver in London. The colonel asks to see the letter, but Dougall refuses. To persuade him, the colonel retells his escape story, this time filling in the missing elements. "Godowski" was a Gestapo agent, who with his boss Oskar Emberg had set up Dougall's escape to penetrate the Resistance. After Dougall leaves Godowski kills Jeanne, who suspected him, then leaves to rejoin Emberg. But the Resistance have Emberg at gunpoint, and await Godowski's arrival. In London, Dougall ruefully hands over the letter.

Noir Hitchcock: *Bon Voyage*

At the turning point of *Vertigo* Hitchcock replays a crucial scene (the death of Madeleine), showing us the missing elements that transform its meaning. It's intriguing to find the germ of that idea 15 years earlier in *Bon Voyage*. What seems, in the airman's naive telling, to be a simple saga of escape and heroism is revealed on a second viewing to be twisted by treachery. Here, as in the film's companion piece *Aventure Malgache*, Hitchcock explores a favourite theme: masquerading and the deceptive nature of appearances.

Both films were made on derisory budgets (Hitchcock was paid £10 a day), but in *Bon Voyage* in particular the limitations are turned to advantage. Hitchcock's art director, Charles Gilbert, and his cinematographer, Günther Krampf (who had photographed *Pandora's Box*), relied on minimal sets shrouded in encroaching shadows, enhancing the sense of menace and uncertainty. With their lack of studio gloss, certain scenes in *Bon Voyage* – the train compartment, the wine cellar where the Vichy spy meets his death – come closer to the grainy, skid-row look of film noir than anything else in Hitchcock's output.

Bon Voyage finds room for several sly gags, such as the escaped airman's obsession with food, and even its own mini-McGuffin in the form of Godowski's mysterious letter. And towards the end, two linked scenes make their point with telling economy. As Godowski jabs a gun into Jeanne's side, Hitchcock tracks into close-up on her face, giving us all her shocked anguish at the offscreen gunshot – and slides down with her body to show the spy, busy phoning his boss, casually pilfering his victim's watch. Cut to Emberg's face as he receives the call – then the reverse movement, pulling back to reveal three grim-faced Resistance men holding him at gunpoint. The message of poetic justice could hardly be more succinctly conveyed.

Philip Kemp

video

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and Peter Dean new retail videos

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Accidental Hero

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 14625

Certificate 15 Director Stephen Frears
A poor performance by Dustin Hoffman, a great script by David Webb Peoples and sentimental but well-timed direction by Frears make this a flawed gem. A low-life is pipped at the publicity post when he commits an altruistic act. (S&S April 1993) □

Army of Darkness

USA 1992/Guild G8707

Certificate 15 Director Sam Raimi
Forbidden to use the name *Evil Dead* in the title, Raimi's third instalment in the once ground-breaking series replaces thrills with knockabout laughs. Visually inspired by Monty Python and Ray Harryhausen, while star Bruce Campbell tips his hat once again to the Three Stooges. Some nice special effects. (S&S June 1993)

Forever Young

USA 1992/Warner VO12571

Certificate PG Director Steve Miner
A gorgeously sentimental romance, well worth the extra box of tissues. Heartbroken pilot Mel Gibson, deep frozen since 1939, wakes up in 1992. Endearing performance by child actor Elijah Wood. (S&S April 1993) □

Honeymoon in Vegas

USA 1992/First Independent RE 7000

Certificate 15 Director Andrew Bergman
Heart-warming comedy about a reticent groom (Nicolas Cage) who accidentally gambles his bride to a LA hustler. Not in the same league as a Preston Sturges, but there are laughs to be had from flying Elvis impersonators. Cage and James Caan are spot on. (S&S March 1993)

Jack the Bear

USA 1993/FoxVideo 5597

Certificate 15 Director Marshall Herskovitz
Danny DeVito leads an impressive cast in

this affecting drama-comedy which subtly balances fantasy with everyday terrors. A bereaved husband - host of a TV horror show - lives opposite 'Norman the psycho', who becomes the focus of his fears. (S&S June 1993) □

Mr Saturday Night

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20196

Certificate 15 Director Billy Crystal
Crystal's personal tale of a failed comedian's life is rewarding and entertaining but could have done with a little less saccharine sentimentality. David Paymer steals the show as Crystal's long-suffering brother. (S&S May 1993)

Romper Stomper

Australia 1992/Medusa MO 388

Certificate 18 Director Geoffrey Wright
Although denounced by the Anti-Nazi League, Wright's raw depiction of skinhead life in Australia improves with successive viewings. Russell Crowe and Daniel Pollock are terrific. Includes interview footage with Russell Crowe. Judge it for yourself. (S&S April 1993)

Scent of a Woman

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 1639

Certificate 15 Director Martin Brest
Brest's direction doesn't achieve the levity of *Midnight Run*, but Al Pacino was finally awarded a long-overdue Oscar for his ironically hammy interpretation of a cantankerous blind colonel. Newcomer Chris O'Donnell steals every scene. (S&S March 1993)

Splitting Heirs

UK 1993/CIC Video VHB 1648

Certificate 15 Director Robert Young
Eric Idle disgraces himself with this limp farce. Abandoned by his parents as a baby, the fifteenth Duke of Bournemouth (Idle) declares war on his American cousin (Rick Moranis), who has usurped his throne. (S&S May 1993)

Storyville

USA 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8249

Certificate 15 Director Mark Frost
David Lynch's former partner goes solo with inauspicious results. A young lawyer's future is jeopardised by a passionate encounter with a mysterious woman. James Spader is reliable in the lead. (S&S August 1993)

Used People

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1993

Certificate 15 Director Beeban Kidron
An endearing ensemble piece with

a strong cast and a likeable script. A widow (Shirley Maclaine) is pursued by Marcello Mastroianni while her daughters (Marcia Gay Harden, Kathy Bates) wrestle with their own personal problems. (S&S April 1993) □

The Waterdance

USA 1991/20.20 Vision CVT 13526

Certificate 15 Directors Neal Jimenez, Michael Steinberg
A witty, joyful and occasionally erotic film which uses Jimenez's wheelchair-bound experiences to explore the nature of masculinity. Eric Stoltz, Wesley Snipes and William Forsythe are superb as men thrown together in a paraplegic ward. Funny and intelligent. (S&S December 1992)

Wild West

UK 1992/First Independent VA 20199

Certificate 15 Director David Attwood
Lively Channel 4 financed romp about a group of west London Pakistani kids who attempt to break into the big time playing country and western honky tonk. Top marks to Naveen Andrews in the lead and to Harwant Bains' sprightly and often daring script. (S&S May 1993)

Premiere

All Shook Up

USA 1993/20.20 Vision NVT 14591

Certificate 15 Director Alan Spencer
Producers Marc S. Fischer, Louis G. Friedman Screenplay Alan Spencer
Lead Actors Arye Gross, Claudia Christian, Adrienne Shelley, Norman Fell 89 minutes
Talented Arye Gross soft-peddles in another romantic-comedy-cum-movie spoof. A hotel clerk (Gross) wangles a date with a top model whose passion turns out to be lethal.

Bruce Lee: The Curse of the Dragon

USA 1993/Warner VO12681

Certificate 15 Directors/Producers Fred Weintraub, Tom Kuhn Screenplay Davis Miller Lead Actors Bruce Lee, James Coburn, Chuck Norris, Karrem Abdul-Jabbar 88 minutes
Documentary about the life of Bruce Lee, updated to include son Brandon Lee's recent death. Bruce's pupils offer insight into the legend and there is behind-the-scenes footage of rehearsals for fight sequences in *Enter the Dragon*.

Carnosaur

USA 1993/First Independent VA 20198

Certificate 18 Director Adam Simon
Producer Mike Elliot Screenplay Harry Adam Knight Lead Actors Diane Ladd, Raphael Sbarge, Jennifer Runyon, Harrison Page 89 minutes
A shoddy *Jurassic Park* rip-off made on a tiny budget for Roger Corman. Gifted director Simon does his best while Diane Ladd appears merely to honour a debt to Corman. Worth it just for the gaudy scene in which a lizard erupts from Ladd's womb.

Complex of Fear

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 361

Certificate 18 Director Brian Grant Producer John Flynn Screenplay Dynananne Asimow, Matt Dorff Lead Actors Hart Bochner, Joe Don Baker, Chelsea Field 90 minutes



Crying in the chapel: Nicolas Cage in 'Honeymoon in Vegas'

Trevor Johnston on the experience of opera on video

Diva delights

Since live opera at its best overwhelms our visual and aural senses in a way no other art form quite achieves, it's inevitable that opera productions on video are often considered a pale substitute for the real thing. Yet the significant niche in the market for opera videos indicates that for many people it has become the only way in which they can enjoy opera. Of course the question remains: what kind of pleasure do we derive from opera on video? While technical advancement in home entertainment systems has meant an improvement in quality reproduction, and the techno-freak opera buff with deep pockets may be watching on laserdisc with its pin-sharp visuals and CD quality audio, most fans still have to contend with an often fuzzy picture and limited sound from their old television and VCR.

A further problem that effects one's enjoyment is the thorny issue of subtitles. Most opera houses provide English surtitles for a performance in a foreign language, yet the major record companies – which release most of the opera videos – for the most part offer teletext subtitles only on their laserdisc releases, leaving the majority of their video equivalents infuriatingly unsubtitled. A point in case is the 1992 Salzburg Festival recording of Richard Strauss' fairytale *Die Frau Ohne Schlatten*. A Götz Friedrich production with Sir Georg Solti conducting the Vienna Philharmonic and a stellar cast, it is a truly mouth-watering prospect for most Straussians, but a skimpy synopsis booklet instead of subtitles means that the non-German speaking aficionado has to acquire a separate libretto.

Yet such minor carping is outweighed by the transportative quality offered by recordings of this kind. The average opera-goer would probably never get within neck-cranning distance of the delights opera on video allows us to experience. Sitting in your armchair, you can now be whisked off to an elite event such as Salzburg; and even Bayreuth, the virtually inaccessible shrine for Wagner devotees, is open to all with videos of the controversial Patrice Chéreau/Pierre Boulez centenary *Ring* cycle and the 90s hi-tech Harry Kupfer/Daniel Barenboim *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* now available.

For the connoisseurs these may seem temptingly collectable items. But if you have ever watched an opera production on television, you'll probably be familiar with the pros and cons of the process. Andrei Tarkovsky's Royal Opera House production of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, performed at the Kirov Opera in St Petersburg, highlights the problems of transferring from stage to screen. The singing and playing is agreeably authentic, and Robert Lloyd's anguished performance in the title role gains from the close-up attention of the camera. Unfortunately, though, the Kirov chorus is reduced to a parade of dots when



Operatic highlights: Joseph Losey's film version of Mozart's 'Don Giovanni'

director Humphrey Burton moves back for a long-shot. In addition, the television format is severely limiting when it has to convey the architectural relationships of Tarkovsky's vision. Directing a work which focuses on Boris' guilt over his murder of the young Tsarevitch to gain the throne, Tarkovsky brings on the stage at key moments the young boy's ghostly white figure and swings a huge globe-shaped pendulum across the back of the stage. The wide shot in the television version significantly reduces the impact of such theatricality, while the swift cutting from Boris to the young victim and then to the pendulum goes against the grain of the director's integrated conception.

Thankfully, there aren't the same problems with productions conceived specifically for the screen. The camera placement in Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's live, made-for-television film version of *Tosca* – shot on Roman locations and made at the exact time of day stated in the libretto – is as inventive as Vittorio Storaro's cinematography is evocative. The performances by principals Catherine Malfitano, Plácido Domingo and Ruggero Raimondi make this subtitled video and laserdisc issue worth investigating by even those merely dipping their toes into the repertoire.

Raimondi turns up again as the eponymous philandering nobleman in what may be the finest of all filmed operas, Joseph Losey's 1979 *Don Giovanni*. Losey shows that with careful *mise en scène*, inspired use of locations (Palladian villas in and around Vicenza) and discreetly stylised costume design, it is possible to realise magnificently Mozart's imaginative landscape. The film's constantly shifting backgrounds create

a sense of hyper-reality entirely germane to opera's natural state of swoony delirium, and this is what distinguishes it from the more prosaic opening-out of the sort Francesco Rosi gives to his otherwise ebullient film of *Carmen*.

Reflecting the fashions in staged productions, opera on video is often an arena for visionaries and mavericks. Shot for video, the mischievous avant-garde director Peter Sellars' radical reworking of operas by Mozart/Da Ponte – his leather clad *Don Giovanni* is set in a New York slum tenement – adeptly matches interpretative brio with the compact demands of the visual medium.

Similarly, in his idiosyncratic 1982 *Parsifal*, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg scales down the pageantry of Wagner's Eastertide spiritual chronicle, setting it inside an elaborate mock-up of the composer's death mask. The film makes great play of the fact that the operatic traditions from which it has sprung are dying out, yet from the collection of flotsam and jetsam at his disposal Syberberg has still managed to create a production of great dignity and hypnotic power. And there's a surprise in store for the cognoscenti – the conductor, Armin Jordan, also appears on screen in a key role as Amfortas, wounded King of the Grail.

As they say in the advertising campaign, "Only on video".

● *Die Frau Ohne Schlatten*, *Boris Godunov* and Peter Sellars' *Don Giovanni* are available from Decca; The *Ring* cycle (video and laserdisc) is from Philips; *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre* and *Tosca* are from Teldec; *Carmen* is from Columbia TriStar; *Parsifal* and Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* will be available 29 November from Artificial Eye Video.

True-life made-for-TV thriller. A serial rapist is tracked by police officer Ray Dolan who has to get to the killer before his wife becomes the next victim.

Crisis in the Kremlin

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 1626

Certificate 15 Director Jonathan Winfrey
Producer Steven Rabiner Screenplay Jonathan Fernandez, Daryl Haney, Catherine Cryan Lead Actors Robert Rustler, Theodore Bikel, Denise Bixler, Doug Wert 84 minutes
Low-budget Corman pic. A CIA agent (Rustler) is dispatched to the Soviet Union on a mission to keep Gorbachev alive during the collapse of Communism.

Diary of a Hitman

USA 1991/FoxVideo 5723

Certificate 18 Director Roy London
Producer Amin Q. Chaudhri Screenplay Kenneth Pressman Lead Actors Forest Whitaker, Sherilyn Fenn, Sharon Stone, James Belushi 86 minutes
A moody psycho-thriller with erotic leanings. A hit man (Whitaker) is stricken by remorse after he is hired to kill a woman (Fenn) and her drug-addicted baby. Whitaker is surprisingly bearable while Stone (pre-*Basic Instinct*) takes a back seat.

Dr. Giggles

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1643

Certificate 18 Director Manny Coto
Producer Stuart M. Besser Screenplay Manny Coto, Graeme Whifler Lead Actors Larry Drake, Holly Marie Combs, Cliff De Young, Glenn Quinn 91 minutes
Coto's slice-and-dice feature about a demented doctor who carves up gormless teenagers is a throwback to 70s slasher films. Satire gives way to a few nicely nasty moments, but the visual flair of the intravenous opening credits sequence is never topped.

Family of Strangers

USA 1993/Braveworld BRV 10157

Certificate PG Director Sheldon Larry
Producers William Gough, John Ryan Screenplay Uncredited Lead Actors Melissa Gilbert, Patty Duke, Martha Gibson, William Shatner 90 minutes
Grim true-life TV fodder. A woman in need of a bypass operation discovers that she is adopted when she investigates her family history for hereditary illness.

Jonathan: The Boy Nobody Wanted

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 348

Certificate PG Director George Kaczender
Producers Peter Nelson, Doris Silverton Screenplay Steve Lawson, Dalene Young Lead Actors Jobeth Williams, Chris Burke, Jeff DeMunn, Tom Mason, Madge Sinclair 93 minutes
A volunteer worker (Jobeth Williams) struggles to give a Down's syndrome child a chance in life against the wishes of his hostile parents. Williams takes the role in her stride.

Just One of the Girls

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 20691

Certificate 15 Director Michael Keusch
Producers Robert Vince, Cal Shumatcher Screenplay Uncredited Lead Actors Corey Haim, Nicole Eggert, Cameron Bancroft, Gabe Khouth 91 minutes
Having flirted with adult thrillers, Haim returns to teen-movies in this unoriginal but not entirely dull sex-change story.

A music student (Haim) disguises himself as a girl to escape the attentions of a bully.

Little Devils: The Birth

USA 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8250

Certificate 15 Director George Pavlov
Producers George Pavlov, Elliot Stein
Screenplay Elliot Stein Lead Actors Marc Price, Nancy Valen, Russ Tamblyn, Stella Stevens 100 minutes
Cheap horror uplifted by lively effects from Image Animation and by Pavlov's direction. Pint-sized demons cause havoc after emerging from slime covering a mausoleum.

Love Bites

USA 1993/First Independent RE 7001

Certificate 15 Director Malcolm Marmorstein Producer Wayne Marmorstein Screenplay Malcolm Marmorstein Lead Actors Adam Ant, Kimberly Foster, Roger Rose, Michelle Forbes, Judy Tenuta 94 minutes
Adaptation of Malcolm Marmorstein's play, heavy on dialogue and confined in its setting. Vampire Zach (Adam Ant) wakes after several centuries to find Kimberly Foster owner of his house. Zach struggles to regain his mortality while his old flames threaten Foster. Passable fun.

Marked for Murder

USA 1993/Imperial Entertainment IMP 130

Certificate 15 Director Mimi Leder Producers Sheldon Pinchuk, Patricia Finnegan Screenplay Dennis Hackin Lead Actors Powers Boothe, Billy Dee Williams, Laura Johnson, Michael Ironside 90 minutes
An ex-convict (Boothe) is employed by the police to give an insider's view of the criminal milieu. Standard cops and robbers action-suspense fare.

Nightmare in the Daylight

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 20687

Certificate 15 Director Lou Antonio Producer Henry Colman Screenplay Frederic Hunter Lead Actors Jaclyn Smith, Christopher Reeve, Tom Mason, Glynnis O'Connor 91 minutes
Made-for-TV thriller with a predictable (but none the less perky) twist. Abusive husband Christopher Reeve tracks a woman who resembles his dead wife.

Out for Blood

USA (Year unknown)/Imperial Entertainment IMP 131

Certificate 18 Director Richard W. Munchkin Producers Joseph Merhi, Richard Pepin Screenplay David S. Green, Paul Maslak, Neva Fried Lead Actors Don Wilson, Shari Shattuck, Michael de Iano, Todd Curtis 86 minutes
With the hilarious credit "Based on a concept by Don 'The Dragon' Wilson" this martial arts vehicle boasts entertaining fight sequences but little else. An attorney fights corruption and vice as "Karate-man".

Out on a Limb

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 1633

Certificate PG Director Francis Veber Producer Michael Hertzberg Screenplay Daniel Goldin, Joshua Goldin Lead Actors Matthew Broderick, Jeffrey Jones, Heidi Kling, John C. Reilly 79 minutes
French comedy writer/director Veber

takes a stab at mainstream entertainment in this screwball comedy. A Manhattan stockbroker is stripped of his car, trousers and wallet while visiting his sister in backwater Buzzsaw. Fun ensues as our hero attempts to trace his possessions and close a million dollar deal.

Over the Line

USA 1993/Warner VO32115

Certificate 18 Directors Oliver Hellman, Robert Barrett Producer Perlichka Navratilova Screenplay Charles Nichterlein, William Clark Lead Actors Lesley-Anne Down, John Enos, Lady B. Pearl, Michael Parks, Tomas Arana 104 minutes
A university dean embarks on a relationship with an obsessive prison inmate. Derivative erotic thriller spiced up by flashes of violence.

Perfect Victim

France/USA 1993/20.20 Vision NVT 20793

Certificate 18 Director Patrick Jamain Producer Pierre Grimblat Screenplay David Preston, Edith Rey Lead Actors Jacques Penot, Teri Austin 93 minutes
In this psycho-thriller an ambitious journalist goes undercover as a video dating agency client to lure a serial killer.

Relentless 3

USA 1992/Warner VO35562

Certificate 18 Director James Lemmo Producers Paul Hertzberg, Lisa M. Hansen Screenplay James Lemmo Lead Actors Leo Rossi, William Forysthe, Robert Costanzo, Tom Bower, Signy Coleman 82 minutes
Retired homicide detective Sam Dietz (Rossi) is brought back to find a serial killer. Like its predecessors, this has a dark charm which marks it off from standard action-suspense. Well handled by Rossi and particularly by Forsythe.

Robot Wars

USA 1993/CIC Video VHB 2771

Certificate PG Director Albert Band Producer Charles Band Screenplay Jackson Barr Lead Actors Don Michael Paul, Barbara Crampton, James Staley, Lisa Rinna, Peter Haskell 89 minutes
Oversized robots do battle in this Band brothers' sequel to the cult hit *Robot Jox*. Cheap and cheerful effects mix with the ludicrous plot and dialogue.

Salt on Our Skin

Germany/Canada/France 1992/Warner VO12646

Certificate 18 Director Andrew Birkin Producers Bernd Eichinger, Martin Moszkowicz Screenplay Andrew Birkin, Bee Gilbert Lead Actors Greta Scacchi, Vincent D'Onofrio, Anais Jeanneret, Hanns Zischler 106 minutes
Handsomely-mounted adaptation of Benoîte Groult's novel *Les Vaisseaux de coeur*, sensitively directed by Birkin, who went on to greater triumphs with *The Cement Garden*. A sophisticated woman (Scacchi) challenges social boundaries when she has an affair with a lusty fisherman (D'Onofrio).

Sketch Artist

USA 1992/Warner VO35593

Certificate 18 Director Phedon Papamichael Producer Brad Krevoy, Steve Sabler Screenplay Michael Angeli Lead Actors Jeff Fahey, Sean Young, Frank McRae, Tcheky

Karyo, Drew Barrymore 86 minutes
A police artist (square-jawed Fahey) draws a description of a murder suspect that resembles his wife and resolves to investigate the mystery.

Walker: Texas Ranger

USA 1993/Warner VO32151

Certificate 18 Director Virgil W. Vogel Producer David Moessinger Screenplay Louise McCarn Lead Actors Chuck Norris, Clarence Gilyard, Gailard Sartain, Sheree J. Wilson, Marshall Teague 90 minutes
In this entertaining action adventure Texas ranger Cordell Walker (Norris) sorts out political and personal problems with a large shotgun. Walker seeks revenge for the killing of a fellow ranger.

Year of the Comet

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20197

Certificate 15 Director/Producer Peter Yates Screenplay William Goldman Lead Actors Penelope Anne Miller, Tim Daly, Louis Jourdan, Ian Richardson 87 minutes
A wine merchant discovers a rare bottle of wine and becomes involved in a plot to brew the juice of eternal youth. Passable romantic fantasy whose flimsiness belies the input of heavyweights Goldman and Yates.

Retail

An Actor's Revenge (Yukinojo Henge)

Japan 1962/Connoisseur Video CR 128
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG Director Kon Ichikawa
In this story of revenge Kazuo Hasegawa

plays both a kabuki theatre female impersonator and the bandit who befriends him. Best seen for Hasegawa's virtuoso performance and the daring visual effects. Subtitles (S&S May 1993)

Alien 3

USA 1992/FoxVideo 5593
(Widescreen WS 5593) Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director David Fincher
(S&S August 1992) 

Basic Instinct

USA 1992/Guild GLD 51362 Price £12.99
(Box set with *Fatal Attraction* Polygram/Guild 0879883 Price £24.99)

Certificate 18 Director Paul Verhoeven
(S&S May 1992)

Blood Camp Thatcher

Australia 1981/VIPCO VIP 046
Price £12.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Brian Trenchard-Smith
Steve Railsback and Olivia Hussey flee a futuristic prison camp. Aka *Escape 2000*/Turkey Shoot (MFB No. 590)

Bloody Moon

West Germany/Spain 1981/VIPCO VIP 054
Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Jesús (Jess) Franco
A disfigured, mentally disturbed young man and his sister, with whom he is incestuously involved, are chief suspects in a serial murder case. One of the original 'nasty' films. (MFB No. 580)

Boomerang

USA 1992/CIC Video VHR 2687
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Reginald Hudlin
(S&S December 1992)



Lonely passion: Elizabeth Taylor stars in 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof'

Bronx Warriors (1990) Guerrieri del Bronx

Italy 1982/Unique Films UF 8001
Price £12.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Enzo G. Castellari
The Bronx is inhabited by vicious bike gangs. When a runaway heiress seeks refuge with Trash and his gang, lethal cop Hammer is sent to rescue her using any means possible. Aka 1990 - *The Bronx Warriors*. (MFB No. 594)

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1972 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Fran Rubel Kuzui
(S&S November 1992) 

Camille Claudel

France 1988/Arthouse AHO 6001
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG Director Bruno Nuytten
Long, literal reading of the fascinating life of Auguste Rodin's apprentice, who was also his mistress for 15 years. Nuytten traces Claudel's fleeting success and later descent into madness and poverty after rejection by the great master. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 663)

Carry On Columbus

UK 1992/Warner SO 50060 Price £8.99

Certificate PG Director Gerald Thomas
(S&S October 1992)

The Cars That Ate Paris

Australia 1974/Arthouse AHP 5001
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Peter Weir
Weir's debut movie is about a town (Paris, Australia) that lives off cars. The locals lay traps to glean spare parts and then use the crash victims for medical experiments. A sole survivor finds that the town provides him with his first family until disaffected youths in hot rods take their revenge. (MFB No. 496)

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

USA 1958/MGM/UA SO 50060 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Richard Brooks
Excellent adaptation of the Tennessee Williams play with Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor sizzling as the sexually frustrated couple. Big Daddy, dying of cancer, gathers together the family - all of whom hope to benefit from his death. (MFB No. 298)

Class Action

USA 1990/FoxVideo 1869 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Michael Apted
(S&S July 1991)

Death in Brunswick

Australia 1990/Electric Pictures EP 0039
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director John Ruane
Likeable black comedy with squalid Melbourne loser Sam Neill becoming a chef, falling for the boss' fiancée and then accidentally killing his assistant. (S&S February 1992)

Desperate Hours

USA 1990/FoxVideo 2581 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Michael Cimino
(MFB No. 686)

Devil Girl from Mars

UK 1955/Lumiere LUM 2043 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director David Macdonald
A messenger from Mars arrives in the Scottish highlands to capture men for reproductive purposes and surrounds



If looks could kill: Louise Brooks as Lulu in 'Pandora's Box'

the village with an invisible wall. *B/W*
(MFB No. 245)

**Les Enfants du Paradis
(The Children of Paradise)**

France 1945/Artificial Eye ART 066/
ART 066B Price £15.99/£22.49

Certificate PG Director Marcel Carné
This masterpiece is understandably on many people's favourite movie list. The lives of six Parisians are intertwined against the backdrop of the mid-19th century popular theatre and underworld. Released in two versions with the latter complete with original screenplay. *B/W Subtitles* (S&S September 1993)

The Finest Hour

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 28592
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Shimon Dotan
(S&S Video March 1993)

The House in Nightmare Park

UK 1973/Lumiere LUM 2044 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Peter Sykes
A standard comic horror about an actor who is hired to perform in a haunted house. Featuring the unlikely pairing of Frankie Howerd and Ray Milland. (MFB No. 472)

Into the West

Eire 1992/Entertainment EVS 1113
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Mike Newell
(S&S January 1993)

I See Ice

UK 1938/Lumiere LUM 2016 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Anthony Kimmins
George Formby plays a disaster prone props man working for an ice ballet company who accidentally photographs some crooks at work. *B/W* (MFB No. 50)

Jack's Back

USA 1988/FoxVideo 2107 Price £8.99

Certificate 18 Director Rowdy Herrington
James Spader plays identical twins in this thoughtful psychological thriller about a Jack the Ripper copycat killer in LA.

Jamón Jamón

Spain 1992/Tartan Video TVT 1098
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Bigas Luna

A young man is recruited by two underwear magnates to seduce their pregnant future daughter-in-law to prevent her from marrying their son. A beautiful looking, wry stab at Spanish machismo. *Subtitles* (S&S June 1993)

J'embrasse pas (I Don't Kiss)

France 1991/Tartan Video TVT 1094
Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director André Techiné
Grim rites-of-passage film enlivened by a superb central performance by Manuel Blanc. A provincial boy goes to Paris to fulfill a dream of becoming an actor, but finds only homelessness, poverty and despair. He finally turns to prostitution to survive. *Subtitles* (S&S April 1992)

The Jungle Book

USA 1967/Walt Disney D211222
Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Wolfgang Reitherman

The last full-length animation personally supervised by Walt before his death is still a favourite. A baby reared by wolves in the jungle considers leaving when a man-hating tiger returns to the bush. (MFB No. 408)

The Last of the Mohicans

USA 1992/Warner SO 12619
Price £12.99/Widescreen SO 13070

Certificate 15 Director Michael Mann
(S&S November 1992)

A League of Their Own

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVR 24589
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Penny Marshall
(S&S November 1992) 

The Long Day Closes

UK 1992/Curzon CV 0028 Price £15.99
Certificate PG Director Terence Davies
(S&S June 1992)

The Mambo Kings

USA 1992/Warner SO 12308 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Arne Glimcher
(S&S June 1992)

The Music Teacher (Le Maître de musique)

Belgium 1989/Mainline MPV 002
Price £15.99

Certificate U Director Gérard Corbiau
A famous opera singer announces his

retirement so that he can train a young soprano and a tenor for a singing contest organised by a deadly rival. Echoes of *Amadeus* in this beautifully scored picture. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 681)

No Limit

UK 1935/Lumiere LUM 2017 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Monty Banks
One of Ealing Studios' most commercially successful pictures has George Formby playing a chimney sweep's assistant who dreams of winning the Isle of Man's motorcycle race. *B/W* (MFB No. 174)

North by Northwest

USA 1959/MGM/UA SO 50104 Price £8.99

Certificate PG Director Alfred Hitchcock
Cary Grant tries to avoid James Mason's gang of thugs, who think he is a US intelligence agent, without letting them know he's really an innocent bystander. (MFB No. 309)

The Nun's Story

USA 1959/Warner SO 11171 Price £8.99

Certificate PG Director Fred Zinnemann
Nice reminder of one of the late, great Audrey Hepburn's finest performances. A young Belgian struggles to become a successful member of an order of cloistered nuns. (MFB No. 308)

Pandora's Box (Die Büchse der Pandora)

Germany 1929/Tartan Video TVT 1115
Price £15.99

Certificate TBC Director G.W. Pabst
A high-class hooker wreaks havoc before fleeing the police and meeting her fate at the hands of Jack the Ripper. German audiences objected to the casting of an American (Louise Brooks) in the lead and the less than flattering portrait of a crumbling society. There have been many versions of this film, but thankfully this is not the print in which Lulu joins the Salvation Army! *B/W Silent* (MFB No. 484)

The Quiet Earth

New Zealand 1985/Arthouse AHP 5002
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Geoff Murphy
Zac wakes up one morning to find himself the sole survivor of a secret energy experiment that has gone horrifically wrong. The first half-hour of this science fiction, in which he acts out his fantasies, is particularly good. (MFB No. 627)

Rampage

USA 1987/FoxVideo 5169 Price £8.99

Certificate 18 Director William Friedkin
Patchy, confused piece which is the UK cut and not the recently shown US cinema print. Liberal assistant DA Michael Biehn finds his anti-capital punishment stance wavering when he prosecutes a serial killer.

Ricochet

USA 1991/First Independent VA 30294
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Russell Mulcahy
(S&S May 1992)

Santa Claus: The Movie

USA 1985/Lumiere S038063 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Jeannot Szwarc
Dudley Moore's disenchanted toymaker falls into the evil clutches of a toy tycoon in the Big Apple. (MFB No. 623)

Savage Nights (Les Nuits féroces)

France 1992/Artificial Eye ART 064
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Cyril Collard
On and off-screen life intersect in this impressive tale of an HIV-positive cameraman involved in a bizarre *ménage à trois*. The writer/star/director's death from Aids increases the poignancy, but the film's anti-heroic stance cleverly creates some detachment. *Subtitles* (S&S June 1993)


Seven Songs for Malcolm X

UK 1993/Electric Pictures EP0046
Price £9.99

Certificate PG Director John Akomfrah
This documentary on the African American political leader is the first film from the Black Audio Film Collective available on video. (S&S May 1993)

Sister Act

USA 1992/Touchstone D414522
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Emile Ardolino
(S&S December 1992) 

Sniper

USA 1992/Entertainment EVS 1117
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Luis Llosa
(S&S April 1993)

Strictly Ballroom

Australia 1992/VCI VC 3432 Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Baz Luhrmann
(S&S October 1992) 

Stryker

Philippines 1983/Lumiere LUM 2020
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Cirio Santiago
Mad Max-style post-holocaust thriller in which a soldier of fortune attempts to wrest a group of warrior women from the clutches of an evil tribe. (MFB No. 602)

Sweet Smell of Success

USA 1957/MGM/UA SO 51434 Price £8.99

Certificate PG Director Alexander Mackendrick
Tony Curtis and Burt Lancaster are marvellous as a crooked PR man and gossip columnist who conspire to wreck the romance of the latter's sister. *B/W* (MFB No. 602)

Tango

France 1993/Artificial Eye ART 065 Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Patrice Leconte
In this witty, wicked black comedy, a wife murderer (Richard Bohringer) is blackmailed by a judge (Philippe Noiret) into killing his nephew's estranged wife. Leconte reunites the successful Noiret-Lhermitte team from *Le Cop* and pays homage to *Divu*, *North by Northwest* and *Duel*. Stunning visuals with more than an echo of Bertrand Blier. *Subtitles* (S&S August 1993)

Torso

(I Corpi presentano tracce di violenza carnale)

Italy 1973/VIPCO VIPOSO Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Sergio Martino
Tiresome stalk-and-slash set in an Italian university. The climax is rousing with Suzy Kendall fending off a masked attacker. (MFB No. 497)

Toy Soldiers

USA 1990/Columbia TriStar CVR 23501
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Daniel Petrie Jr
(S&S October 1991)

The Trial (Le Procès)

France/Italy/West Germany
1962/Arthouse AHC 7001 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Orson Welles
Josef K wakes up and finds himself under arrest but is not told the reason why. Welles lost funding halfway through production and was forced to concoct a stunning expressionistic visual style for this rendering of Kafka's nightmare novel. *B/W* (MFB No. 360)

The Trial

UK 1992/FoxVideo MH502 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director David Jones
Star-studded and well-acted version of the above, with Harold Pinter scripting and Kyle MacLachlan playing Josef K. Originally commissioned by the BBC, it has all the trappings of a well-funded costume drama. (S&S July 1993)

Voyager

Germany 1992/Curzon CV 0027 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Volker Schlöndorff
(S&S February 1992)

The Watchmaker of Saint-Paul (L'Horloger de Saint-Paul)

France 1974/Arthouse AHO 6003
Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Bertrand Tavernier
Philippe Noiret plays a watchmaker whose son is being hunted for the murder of a security guard. Noiret's relationship with the investigating officer and reflections on his role as a father form the crux of Tavernier's fascinating debut. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 521)

Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället)

Sweden 1957/Tartan Video TVT 1065
Price £21.99

Certificate 15 Director Ingmar Bergman
Veteran Swedish director Victor Sjöström (*The Wind*) plays an aged professor who drives with his daughter-in-law to collect an honorary doctorate and is haunted by memories of his past. A limited box set which includes the original screenplay. *B/W* *Subtitles* (MFB No. 299)

Wind


USA 1992/Entertainment EVS 1106
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Carroll Ballard
(S&S April 1993)

Retail premiere

A Brief History of Time

UK/USA 1991/PolyGram 0881043
Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Errol Morris
Producers Gordon Freedman, David Hickman *Screenplay* Based on the book by Stephen Hawking  *minutes*
Hawking's best-seller is brought to the screen in Morris' second collaboration with composer Philip Glass. More didactic than *The Thin Blue Line* but still fascinating.

WIND UP

By Peter Dean



Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg return in 'The Avengers'

The original 'The Avengers' series is just about the only classic cult television show without a video release. Now that it has one, after a lengthy rights clearing process, the media handwagon is gearing up so that come December you'll be wishing that Steed and Peel had stayed in the film vaults where they've belonged unseen for a decade or more.

Lumiere Video, which boasts the largest English-speaking film library outside North America, calls 'The Avengers' "The jewel in our TV crown". The company has planned an extensive and complicated release structure which will give punters "a multitude of ways to see 'The Avengers'" or, if we see it more cynically, to ensure that they squeeze every last cent out of the collector's pocket. Rather than releasing the titles chronologically, Lumiere is pairing one black and white and one colour episode on each video cassette, with different combinations released on the rental and retail markets. In addition, there is a special boxed set featuring all of the Diana Rigg episodes as well as collectors' plates and other memorabilia for sale. Dedicated buffs will, of course, buy everything and in a few years, when the various combinations of episodes are rearranged, they'll presumably be purchased all over again.

Cult film audiences are obsessive collectors. On the day 'Deep Space Nine', the new 'Star Trek' incarnation, was released on video in August there were queues stretching out of several high street shops. When the videos didn't arrive at Virgin's Oxford Street store there was anorak pandemonium as fans raced with sweaty palms to nearby HMV to buy their copies. Being a 'Trekkie' is probably the most expensive kind of video cult fan. On offer to the 'Star Trek' devotees are six feature films, the extended version of 'Star Trek: The Motion Picture', the widescreen version of 'Star Trek VI - The Undiscovered Country' and the 25th anniversary boxed set, 41 volumes of the original TV series (including both the black and white and colour episodes of 'The Cage'), 6 series and 76 volumes of 'Star Trek: The New Generation', 10 volumes of series one of 'Deep Space Nine' plus a special collectors' edition and seven volumes of the animated 'Star Trek' series - which, if all were purchased, would set the fan back £1,631.07. And that's not including the uniforms and stick-on ears.

Video has helped nurture cult movies. This month, for example, there are 11 retail videos released as 'cult' films, as well as a number of others which could arguably be called cult. These include 'The House in Nightmare Park' and 'Devil Girl from Mars', which are part of Lumiere Video's 'British Cult Classics' series; the specialist label Unique Films kicks off this month with its release of the cult film 'Bronx Warriors'; and VIPCO's 'Cult Classics' label is releasing eight new titles including 'Night of the Demon', 'Prozzie' and 'Blood Camp Thatcher' under the bizarre sub-genres "Demented", "Sex Stalker" and "Crimson Spurter". VIPCO's videos are called "Cult Classics" presumably as a final attempt to sell mediocre films. As one video executive commented, "You either call them crap or cult - we could hardly call them the 'Crap Collection'."

Whereas a cult film buff would have previously relied on late night and film club screenings, video has created a new avenue of access. One result of this is that films released straight to video - which are not usually afforded the same publicity fanfare as those that are given a theatrical release - can develop a following through word of mouth. In particular, genre films such as horror, sci-fi and comedy fall into this category. Another virtue of video is that it can give a new lease of life to a film that may have been a box-office disaster or to a star who may have a flagging career. The theatrical flop 'The Blues Brothers' developed a loyal following on video. As did the star Steve Martin after the disastrous cinema release of 'The Jerk' resulted in his next two films 'The Man With Two Brains' and 'The Lonely Guy' going straight to video. There they achieved cult status. The Martin fan at that time could also rent 'Movers and Shakers' and 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' - fast-forwarding to his cameos.

Video has liberated film from the projection booth and traditional cinema distribution and placed it in the hands of the buff collector, with the result that a fan's infatuation with a film or film star can be indulged in the comfort of his or her home. This may involve a degree of financial exploitation by the video companies but at least fans have greater choice than when they had to wait for television repeats of 'The Prisoner' or else for that lucky break at the local film society.

"Everything we'd expect from the maker of the cult classic The Iron Man. A masterpiece." William Gibson.

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Bizarre, beautiful and horrific, TETSUO II: BODY HAMMER is the overwhelming sequel to the cult classic TETSUO: THE IRON MAN. Here is Japan's answer to BLADERUNNER and THE TERMINATOR. The young cyber-punk director Shinya Tsukamoto, whose IRON MAN inspired comparison with Lynch and Cronenberg, has again created a visually astounding mix of weird sci-fi nightmares and relentlessly energetic Manga/comic strip action. Kinetic energy, sumptuous colour and breathtaking special effects are used to tell the story of a deadly battle between mutant skinheads and a Tokyo businessman.



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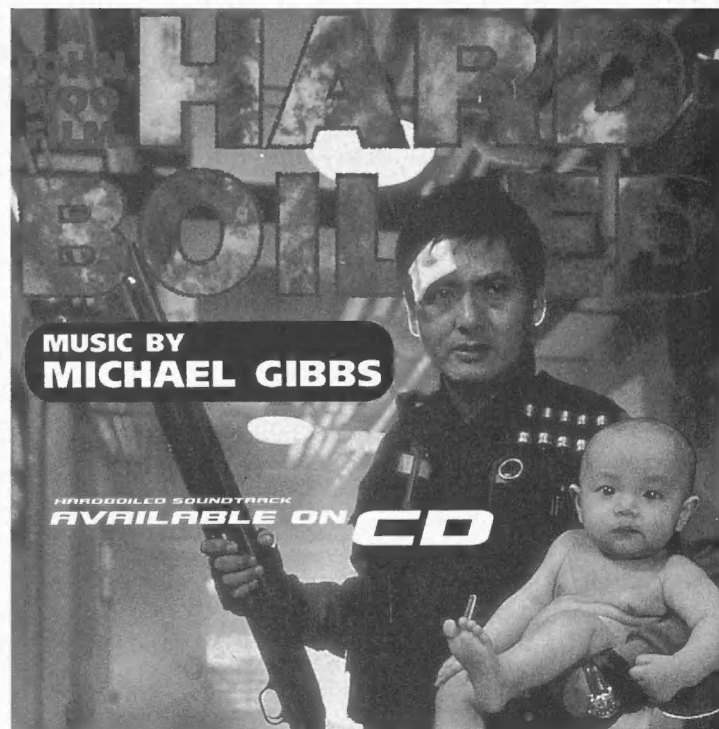
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Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Whopping Edinburgh

From Penny Thomson, Director, EIFF

Alan Hunter is a shade disingenuous in his appraisal of Edinburgh this year (\$65 October). First, the American Independent section he praises so highly was co-ordinated by one Alan Hunter, funny coincidence, no? Secondly, he talks of the coincidental appearance of new films by Jarman, Leigh and Loach. Well, yes and no – Edinburgh's British strand has been growing in strength year by year and although it must be admitted that the film festival doesn't actually make films, we are extremely proud that these directors wanted their films to be premiered in Edinburgh.

I'm afraid he's wrong in referring to a lack of material from Africa – he ignores the retrospective given to South African animator William Kentridge. But of course, animation doesn't count, does it? Tough too, that Alan couldn't find time to see those other Panorama films from the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Iran and Taiwan, for example.

Finally, he's right about one thing – we did increase our audience – by a whopping 42 per cent and in cinemas with a total capacity of less than 300. Price increases for evening shows were offset by a very user-friendly range of concessions and special offers. The evidence is that the 93 festival worked. Fortunately, Edinburgh's reputation rests on something more fundamental and important than one British critic intent on looking backwards, but your discriminating readers have a right to a more balanced and honest view.

Edinburgh

Censoring horror

From Tim Turner

Mark Kermode's "Wind Up" column (\$65 October) left me annoyed and frustrated. Even if we ignore the censorship issue (and I readily concede that Kermode's views and mine would probably be at odds) he ignores what to me is a crucial issue. The defendant was attempting to sell uncertificated videos, which is a criminal offence. I don't care whether the films were of artistic merit or not, the law is the law, fair or not. Prosecutions on the obscenity issue aside, the defendant ought to be charged with a simple breach of the Video Recordings Act because he had committed a crime. Three months may or may not be a stiff sentence, but he deserved something for putting his judgement in place of the law's.

I agree with Kermode's assertion that several titles got caught up in the "Video Nasties" scare quite unjustifiably. Having read the book that Martin Barker edited, I agree with the theory that Graham Bright's motives in putting the Video Act before the Commons was to present a law and order issue which the embattled Conservative Party could appear to control (when in reality it was a minor problem). But I will make two statements to go with all of Kermode's. Video censorship is a requirement – the free-for-all that existed before is unacceptable. Secondly, the justification for

Nekromantik 2, that one needs a certain level of "genre literacy" to appreciate it, that one has to be in Linda Ruth Williams words an "aficionado", is unsound. It is elitist (ie, the general public don't understand this stuff so they can't be allowed to judge it) and it could be used to justify absolutely anything.

I am not an "aficionado", and haven't seen the films in question, so I cannot pass judgement. I admit that I prefer horror movies that are made to scare rather than alienate. I believe that most pornography is inherently misogynistic because it represents women as submissive sex objects. In short, I am a million miles away from objectivity. But quite clearly so is Mark Kermode. He loads his article with subjectivity ("what are considered 'controversial' videos", "in my opinion" etc), indeed he is involved in one side of the case in question, and yet he climbs on to a high horse of authority. He doesn't give an opinion, he "explains", and concludes on a note of certainty that allows for no argument.

If this sort of polemic is to be tolerated, it has to be with the perspective of the other side's point of view. The opposition's ideas have to be at least acknowledged if not actually solicited. Otherwise, why not call it "In My Personal Opinion, by Mark Kermode", so readers are aware of where they stand.

Wigan, Lancashire

Mark Kermode replies: The defendant in this case had already been prosecuted under trading standards laws (Video Recordings Act), found guilty, and fined. The subsequent hearing and three month sentence related solely to an obscenity charge, which the CPS pursued after their successful trading standards prosecution. Unlike so many cases in which these issues are muddled, this case was intriguing exactly because the legal issue on trial here was obscenity alone.

Under British law, for a film to be 'obscene', it must show a tendency to deprave and corrupt those persons likely to come into contact with it. It is thus relevant in such cases to ask how the film will be read by its likely audience. This isn't elitism; it is how British obscenity laws are meant to work.

Linda Ruth Williams did not say that one must be an "aficionado" to appreciate these films. Of the title *Excesse de Sade*, she said "the film contains no forced acts of sex... [the acts] are essentially non-aggressive, mutually pleasurable to the aficionado, and mutually consenting."

FBI and the letterbox

From Brian Chan

Chris Long's "Wind Up" (\$65 September) about what we usually lose by watching movies on TV sets prompts me to draw the following parallel: if you buy a paperback edition of a novel that originally came out in hardcover, you would be more than annoyed to find that, because the paperback format is smaller, the publishers expect you to be content with two-thirds or three-quarters of the original text – that is, if they simply cut off an inch or two from the edges of the hardcover's pages and sold you the rest packaged under a new cover. Yet, since the advent of the video, this is precisely what has been going on with

movies presented in that format and I haven't read anywhere that anyone has ever questioned its legality. Such questioning might have long ago led to an acceptable way of presenting the entire "text" of every movie presented on video, as well as opening the chance again for American directors, as opposed to producers and film studios, to have the same copyright over their films that I understand their European counterparts do.

There should be no need to wait for a Steven Spielberg to specify that (some of) his movies be letterboxed so that we might see what he intended us to. Let letterbox be the standard legal way of selling a movie in the current VCR-to-TV format; if viewers can accept those mandatory FBI/Interpol WARNINGS at the start of every film, designed to protect the movie – and video producers – against being ripped off, then we can also accept another warning notice before a film begins that letterboxing has been decided on for aesthetic, technical and ethical (and hopefully one day legal) reasons.

Another advantage of universalising letterbox would be the utilisation of the black space under the image for clear white uncluttered subtitling (all films being 'foreign', depending on where they're shown) so that the image itself would not have to be cluttered with words to varying degrees of legibility. For example, contrast the different feeling of translation you get from a Kurosawa CinemaScope movie letterboxed on video with *My Twentieth Century's* English subtitles printed on a clarifying band that often threatens to overtake the whole bottom half of the image.

Finally, while we're on the issue of legibility, film-makers might like to extend their imaginations to include the difficulties that video audiences have, sometimes, in reading the final reverse waterfall of credits at the end of most films these days. I for one do not want to get accustomed to it as a perfunctory unreadable blur. Since video has in a way extended the existence and memory-scope of films, and since there are people who are really interested in who did what to make what-else happen, it would be nice if the guys who make those credit lists for the big screen could remember that they will eventually end up on a much smaller one in my living room.

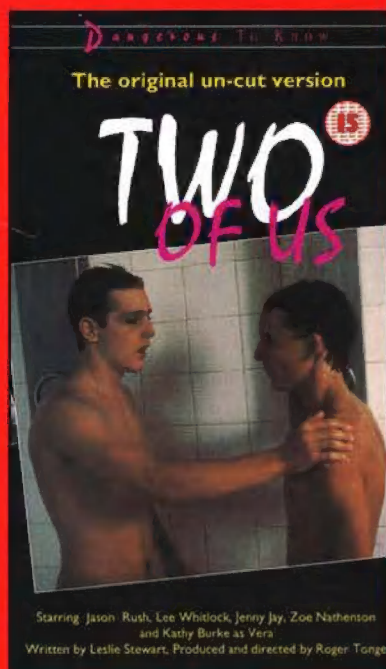
Alberta, Canada

Additions and corrections

February 1993: The obituaries for 1992 omitted the great Japanese documentary-maker Shinsuke Ogawa who died on 7 February 1992. Ogawa was best known in the West for his series of films about the anti-Narita Airport protest movement (eg *Peasants of the Second Fortress*), but he also pioneered the Japanese Left's return to the land after the battles of the 70s and founded Asia's only serious documentary festival in Yamagata. His last two films, *Furuyashiki: A Japanese Village* and *Magino Village: A Tale*, were his masterpieces.

August 1993: In the credits for *Tango* (page 51) the term widescreen was incorrectly listed. The film is in scope.

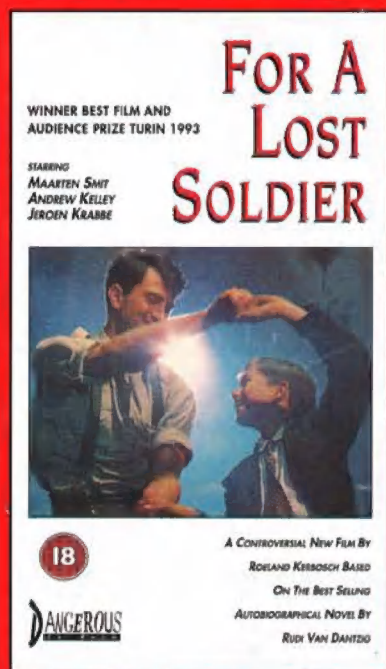
September 1993: The *Baby of Mâcon* (page 40) is in colour (Cineco BV).



"TOO CORRUPT"



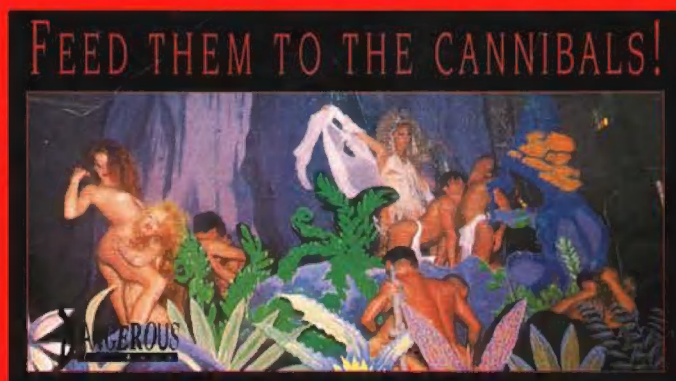
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